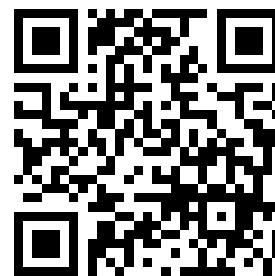

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>





DISCOURSES, ESSAYS, and TRACTS,

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS:

V I Z.

The rational Foundation of a christian Church.	The christian Doctrine of the Trinity.
A new Essay on civil Power in Things sacred.	Seven Dissertations on the Trinity.
The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind.	Useful and important Questions concerning JESUS the SON of GOD freely proposed, and answered. And,
An Essay on the Freedom of Will in GOD and in Creatures.	The Glory of CHRIST as GOD-MAN displayed.

By the late Reverend and Learned

I S A A C W A T T S, D. D.

V O L. VI.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. and T. LONGMAN at the Ship, and J. BUCKLAND at the Buck, in Paternoster Row; J. OSWALD at the Rose and Crown in the Poultry; J. WAUGH at the Turk's Head in Lombard-Street; and J. WARD at the King's Arms in Cornhill. MDCCLIII.



T H E
C O N T E N T S
O F T H E
S I X T H and last V O L U M E.

- T**HE RATIONAL FOUNDATION,
FORM and ORDER of a christian
CHURCH. page 1
- Section I. Reason and revelation agree to
require social religion. ibid.
- Section II. Instances of the agreement of
reason and revelation in social reli-
gion. 4
- Section III. A brief enquiry how far the
modes of the mission, or ordination,
of primitive ministers, are our rule
now. 13
- Section IV. The rest of the instances
wherein reason and revelation agree in
matters of social worship. 17
- Section V. Where revelation is silent,
reason must direct. 19
- Section VI. Christian churches formed
like civil societies, upon the plain na-
ture and reason of things. 29
- Section VII. The several advantages of
such a church, or christian society. 31
- Section VIII. Of the power of churches
to appoint holy things or actions. 34
- The TERMS of christian COMMUNION.**
38
- QUESTION I.** What is christian com-
munion? And what are the general
and agreed terms of it? ibid.
- QUESTION II.** Who are the proper
judges of the credibility of our pro-
fession? 40
- QUESTION III.** What are the particular
terms of christian communion? Or,
what things are necessary to make the
profession of christianity credible?
page 47
- QUESTION IV.** What is a church cove-
nant? And whether it be necessary to
christian communion? 54
- QUESTION V.** When a person is once
joined to a particular church, whether
he may never worship with other
churches occasionally, or change his fix-
ed communion to another church? 57
- QUESTION VI.** Whether fixed com-
munion with some particular church
be a necessary duty: And whether any
may be admitted to occasional com-
munion, who are no fixed members of
any church? 58
- QUESTION VII.** What knowledge is ne-
cessary for christian communion? 61
- QUESTION VIII.** In what words and ex-
pressions must our faith be professed,
in order to communion? And in what
manner must we profess it? 67
- QUESTION IX.** Where the seclusion from
christian communion carries temporal
inconveniencies with it, hath a particu-
lar church the power to seclude a per-
son merely for want of orthodoxy? 71
- QUESTION X.** Whether a profession to
believe the express words of scripture,
without any explication, be an evi-
a 2 dence

dence of knowledge sufficient. for christian communion ?	page 73	Section VI. Of public worship on the principles of natural religion.	page 148
QUESTION XI. Whether all sorts of protestants may join together as members of the same church ?	88	Section VII. Of particular religions supposed to be revealed.	150
QUESTION XII. Whether no christians must join in the same communion, but those that are in all things of the same opinion ?	95	Section VIII. Of a particular religion professed by the ruling powers.	154
DISCOURSE I.	100	Section IX. Of a religion established among the rulers and officers of the state.	157
A pattern for a dissenting preacher.		Section X. Of the power of the prince in every worshipping assembly.	162
JOHN vii. 46.		The conclusion.	167
"The officers answered, never man spake like this man."	ibid.	The APPENDIX, or a view of the origin of a christian church.	169
DISCOURSE II.	112	The RUIN and RECOVERY of MANKIND: or, an Attempt to vindicate the scriptural ACCOUNT of these great events upon the plain principles of REASON.	177
A SERMON preached at the separation of two deacons to their office.		The preface.	179
I TIMOTHY iii. 13.		Advertisement concerning the second edition.	183
"For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS."	ibid.	Introduction. God made man upright.	187
DISCOURSE III.	121	QUESTION I. Is mankind a degenerate creature ?	191
Invitations to church-fellowship.		QUESTION II. Whence came this universal degeneracy ?	221
PSALM lxxv. 4.		QUESTION III. Could a wise, holy and righteous GOD admit of such a constitution ?	226
"Blessed is the man whom thou chusest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."	ibid.	QUESTION IV. Is it just that millions suffer for the sin of one ?	235
A NEW ESSAY on civil power in things sacred.	131	QUESTION V. Did mankind chuse one for their representative ?	238
Preface.	133	QUESTION VI. Could the soul be defiled with the evil ferments of the body ?	241
Section I. Of the nature and ends of civil government, with the several kinds of it, and of it's extent to religion.	135	QUESTION VII. Would God upite innocent souls to defiled bodies ?	243
Section II. The necessity of acknowledging a GOD, and the religion of an oath.	138	QUESTION VIII. Does the word of God give this account of things ?	246
Section III. Of public teachers of the laws and morality.	142	QUESTION IX. What can the light of nature discover concerning the proper penalty due to the sin of man, or the proper punishment inflicted on man for sin ?	258
Section IV. Of the people's attendance on these public teachers	145	QUESTION	
Section V. The qualifications of complete subjects of the state, and of the magistrates thereof.	147		

The C O N T E N T S.

<p>QUESTION X. What hope of recovery can our reason give us? page 264</p> <p>QUESTION XI. What means that death which scripture threatens for sin? 270</p> <p>QUESTION XII. What doth scripture reveal of the recovery of man? 275</p> <p>QUESTION XIII. Doth this hope of recovery or salvation extend to all men? 283</p> <p>QUESTION XIV. Can the different opinions of christians, concerning the operations of divine grace on the souls of men, be reconciled? 297</p> <p>QUESTION XV. What is the state and condition of the heathens, who never heard of the gospel, or have utterly forgot and lost all notices of it? 307</p> <p>QUESTION XVI. What will be the state and condition of dying infants? 308</p> <p>The conclusion, or the advantages of this whole scheme? 317</p> <p>Three ESSAYS by way of APPENDIX. 321</p> <p>ESSAY I. Whether the present miseries of man alone will prove his early apostasy from God? 323</p> <p>Section I. The follies and miseries of mankind in a general survey. <i>ibid.</i></p> <p>Section II. A particular view of the miseries of man. 325</p> <p>Section III. Answers to objections against this argument. 331</p> <p>Section IV. A full proof of man's apostasy by scripture and reason, derived from their sinfulness. 342</p> <p>ESSAY II. Or, a plain explication of the doctrine of imputed sin and imputed righteousness. 349</p> <p>ESSAY III. On the guilt and defilement of sin, and how far they may be transferred to others. 359</p> <p>POSTSCRIPT to these ESSAYS, containing some remarks on Mr. BALGUY, and Mr. WOLLASTON. 368</p> <p>An ESSAY on the FREEDOM of WILL in GOD and in CREATURES. 373</p> <p>Section I. Of liberty and necessity, and how far they are consistent. 375</p>	<p>Section II. What determines the will to chuse or act. page 381</p> <p>Section III. The will is a self-determining power. 384</p> <p>Section IV. How the will of God determines itself. 388</p> <p>Section V. The advantages of this scheme of liberty. 392</p> <p>Section VI. Objections answered. 397</p> <p>Section VII. The difficulties which attend the contrary scheme. 403</p> <p>The CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE of the TRINITY: OF FATHER, SON and SPIRIT, three PERSONS and one GOD. 413</p> <p>The preface. 415</p> <p>The introduction. 419</p> <p>PROPOSITION I. There is a GOD. 422</p> <p>PROPOSITION II. God is the creator, disposer and governor of all things. <i>ibid.</i></p> <p>PROPOSITION III. There is, and there can be but one true GOD. 425</p> <p>PROPOSITION IV. The peculiar, divine, and distinguishing characters of godhead cannot belong to any other being. 426</p> <p>PROPOSITION V. God cannot suffer these characters to be ascribed to any other besides himself. 427</p> <p>PROPOSITION VI. These peculiar characters of godhead are clearly revealed in scripture. 428</p> <p>PROPOSITION VII. These peculiar characters are the names, titles, attributes, works and worship which God hath assumed to himself in his word. <i>ibid.</i></p> <p>PROPOSITION VIII. These peculiar characters are ascribed to three by God himself in his word, viz. Father, Son, and holy Spirit. 429</p> <p>PROPOSITION IX. There are also some other circumstantial evidences, that the Son and the Spirit have the true and proper godhead ascribed to them, as well as the Father. 447</p> <p>PROPOSITION X. Therefore the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit have an <i>inti-</i></p>
---	--

- intimate and real communion in one
godhead. page 453
- PROPOSITION XI. Therefore these three
may be properly called the one God,
or the only true God. 454
- PROPOSITION XII. Though these three
are but one God, yet they have dis-
tinct and different properties, actions,
characters and circumstances ascribed
to them. 456
- PROPOSITION XIII. These three distinc-
tions have been usually described by
the word PERSONS. 459
- PROPOSITION XIV. The scripture hath
not precisely determined the particular
way and manner, how these three per-
sons are one God. 460
- PROPOSITION XV. Therefore it can ne-
ver be necessary to salvation to know
that precise way and manner. 461
- PROPOSITION XVI. Yet it is our duty
to believe the general doctrine of the
trinity, viz. that these three personal
agents have real communion in one
godhead. 464
- PROPOSITION XVII. Where any thing
incommunicably divine is ascribed in
scripture to either of these three per-
sons, it should be taken in the plain
and obvious sense of the words. 466
- PROPOSITION XVIII. Where any thing
inferior to the dignity of godhead is
attributed to the person of the Son,
or the holy Spirit, it ought to be im-
puted to some inferior nature or cha-
racter. 467
- PROPOSITION XIX. Inferior natures,
characters or agencies should not at
all hinder our firm belief of the god-
head of these three persons. 471
- PROPOSITION XX. We are bound to
pay divine honours to each of the
sacred three, according to their dis-
tinct characters and offices. 472
- PROPOSITION XXI. By so doing we
shall effectually secure our own salva-
tion. 485
- PROPOSITION XXII. The profession of
this scriptural and practical doc-
trine, entitles to christian communion. page 488
- The conclusion. 489
- DISSERTATIONS relating to the
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE of the TRI-
NITY. 493
- P A R T I.
- The preface. 495
- DISSERTATION I. The ARIAN invited
to the ORTHODOX faith. 501
- Section I. The meaning of the words
ARIAN and ORTHODOXY explained and
ascertained. ibid.
- Section II. The evidences of the ORTHO-
DOX FAITH stated and illustrated. 502
- Section III. The difficulties attending
this scheme removed. 506
- Section IV. The principal objections an-
swered. 508
- The conclusion. 510
- DISSERTATION II. God and man united
in the person of CHRIST. 511
- DISSERTATION III. The worship of
CHRIST as mediator founded on his
godhead. 518
- P A R T II.
- The preface. 545
- DISSERTATION IV. The sentiments of
the ancient JEWS and primitive chris-
tians concerning the Logos or WORD
compared with scripture. 553
- Section I. The general senses of the
term Logos, and it's application to
CHRIST. ibid.
- Section II. A difficulty mentioned, with
a proposal for the solution of it. 556
- Section III. The sentiments of the an-
cient JEWS concerning the Logos, viz.
the apocryphal writers, the targumists,
and PHILO the jew. 558
- Section IV. The application of the jewish
sentiments to the scriptural account of
CHRIST. 570
- Section

Section V. The sentiments of the primitive christians concerning the LOGOS, and their application of this name to CHRIST.	page 574	tempt to answer them according to the scripture.	page 643
Section VI. An enquiry whether the most primitive christian fathers spake of the Logos as an angel, or a glorious spirit inferior to God.	579	The Preface.	645
Section VII. A humble attempt to reconcile the difficulties arising from the various expressions of the primitive fathers.	583	QUESTION I. What is the meaning of of the name SON of GOD, as given to CHRIST in the new testament, where the belief of it is necessary to salvation.	647
Section VIII. Considerations which tend to support this construction of the primitive fathers.	587	Introduction.	ibid.
Section IX. The conclusion.	592	Section I. The first argument toward the proof of the sense of this name SON of GOD.	649
DISSERTATION V. Of the HOLY SPIRIT.	594	Section II. Other arguments to confirm this sense of the name SON of GOD.	657
Section I. The general ideas of the WORD and SPIRIT.	ibid.	Section III. Objections against this sense of the name answered.	660
Section II. The particular representations of the holy Spirit in scripture.	597	Section IV. What advantage is there in not applying the name SON of GOD to the divine nature of CHRIST?	671
Section III. An occasional reflexion on the glory of the holy Spirit.	603	QUESTION II. Did the disciples of CHRIST fully believe that he was the true GOD during his life-time, or not till after his death and resurrection?	673
Section IV. Objections answered.	605	Section I. The JEWS old opinion concerning the MESSIAH.	ibid.
Section V. An explication of various texts according to this account of the holy Spirit.	613	Section II. What ideas did CHRIST give of himself?	675
DISSERTATION VI. Of the use of the word PERSON in the doctrine of the TRINITY.	619	Section III. What idea the disciples had of CHRIST.	676
DISSERTATION VII. Of the distinction of persons in the divine nature; or a humble essay to illustrate the doctrine of the TRINITY, viz. three persons and one GOD.	630	Section IV. What evidence they gave of believing his true deity.	680
Section I. The introduction.	ibid.	Section V. What evidence they gave of disbelieving his true deity.	682
Section II. A general proposal of the analogy between GOD and a human soul.	633	QUESTION III. Could the SON of GOD properly enter into a covenant with his Father to do and suffer what was necessary to our redemption without a human soul?	689
Section III. Several queries to illustrate this doctrine.	637	QUESTION IV. Is the godhead of CHRIST and the godhead of the Father one and the same godhead?	696
Section IV. The conclusion.	639	QUESTION V. Is there an intimate union between the Lord JESUS CHRIST and GOD the Father?	700
Useful and important QUESTIONS concerning JESUS, the SON of GOD freely proposed: with a humble at-			

- QUESTION VI. Is CHRIST the express image of GOD the Father in the human nature, or in the divine? page 705
 Answer. In the human nature. *ibid.*
- QUESTION VII. Are the worship of GOD and his Son JESUS CHRIST consistent with one another? 707
- QUESTION VIII. What is the worship paid to our blessed Saviour, who is the image of GOD? 710
- An ESSAY on the true importance of any human SCHEMES to explain the sacred doctrine of the TRINITY. 713
- Section I. No human scheme of explication necessary to salvation. 715
- Section II. However such a scheme may be of great use to the christian church. 719
- Section III. All such explications ought to be proposed with modesty to the world, and never imposed on the conscience. 721
- The GLORY of CHRIST as GOD-MAN displayed in three DISCOURSES. 723
- The Preface. 725
- DISCOURSE I. A survey of the visible appearances of CHRIST as GOD, before his incarnation. 731
- Section I. A historical account of these appearances. *ibid.*
- Section II. The difficulties relating to this account of the appearances of God under the old testament relieved and adjusted. 753
- APPENDIX to DISCOURSE I. Some observations on the texts of the old testament applied to CHRIST by the christian fathers, and by the JEWS, as well as by the sacred writers. 766
- DISCOURSE II. An inquiry into the extensive powers of CHRIST's human nature in it's present glorified state. page 772
- Section I. A general representation of the subject. *ibid.*
- Section II. Scriptural proofs of the exaltation of the human nature of CHRIST, and the extensive capacities and powers of his soul in his glorified state. 774
- Section III. A rational account how the man JESUS CHRIST may be vested with such extensive powers. 785
- Section IV. Testimonies from other writers. 799
- DISCOURSE III. The early existence of CHRIST's human nature as the first-born of GOD, or as the first of all creatures, before the creation of the world. 802
- Section I. The truth of this doctrine briefly stated. *ibid.*
- Section II. Some propositions leading to the proof of the doctrine proposed. 803
- Section III. Arguments for the pre-existence of CHRIST's human soul, drawn from various considerations of something inferior to godhead ascribed to him before and at his incarnation. 806
- Section IV. Miscellaneous arguments to prove the same doctrine. 817
- Section V. A confirmation of this doctrine by arguments drawn from the happy consequences, and the various advantages of it. 824
- Section VI. Objections answered. 844
- APPENDIX, or a short abridgement of that excellent discourse of the late reverend THOMAS GOODWIN on the glories and royalties that belong to JESUS CHRIST considered as God-man, in his third book of his knowledge of GOD the Father and his Son JESUS CHRIST, page 85 in the second volume of his works. 856

T H E
RATIONAL FOUNDATION
O F A
CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
And the TERMS of
CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

To which are added
T H R E E D I S C O U R S E S,

V I Z.

DISCOURSE I. A pattern for a dissenting preacher.

DISCOURSE II. The office of deacons.

DISCOURSE III. Invitations to church-fellowship.

VOL. VI.

b

T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE principles on which christian churches are built, are so plain, so natural and easy, and so much the same with those which give rise to all the well-formed societies in the world, that one would think there should not be such matter of debate and controversy among christians, upon these subjects, as we have unhappily found.

For besides the reasonableness of the things that are required for this purpose, our blessed Saviour himself has given us so many promises in his word to favour this practice of holy fellowship, and to encourage our hope, as give abundant reason to our expectations of divine success. Has he not told us, that "where two or three are met together in his name, there he is, or will be in the midst of them?" *Matth. xviii. 20.* And when *St. Peter* made a glorious confession of his faith in *JESUS* the Son of God, the promised Saviour; upon this rock, said he, will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

So that if there is found but such faithfulness, such christian virtues of meekness, patience and forbearance, as may be justly expected among christians, I would hope such settlements as these might continue without interruption. And I trust I have here represented these things so faithfully, so plainly and clearly, that no single person, in any part of his practice, will find his conscience imposed upon by any article or canon here mentioned; nor will any society find itself obliged to do any thing in receiving, continuing, or excluding any persons from their church, but what lies natural and easy before the minds of persons, who do but exercise the common reason by which they conduct themselves in the affairs of human life.

Nor is there any thing here asserted, which confines christians to so exact an uniformity in their principles and practices, but by the exercise of their reason, with a small degree of charity, they may make and allow such alterations, as will assist and promote the general peace and edification of the churches, under the care and patronage of *JESUS* the great shepherd.

And

And upon these foundations, if the grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and his Spirit, which is promised to assist the christian church, does but continue among his ordinances, from time to time, we may hope to find a comfortable succession and increase of members added to the church, and built up in faith, love and holiness, till our Lord JESUS CHRIST himself shall return to this world, and finish the great and important work of judgment.

I would only add further, with regard more especially to the questions relating to christian communion, that if any thing contained in them may be effectual through the divine blessing, to set the terms of christian-fellowship in a juster light, to secure the great and necessary principles of christianity, to remove any causes of offence from among the churches, and to lead the several parties of christians, to more moderate and charitable sentiments concerning each other, I shall have abundant reason to rejoice in my attempt, and give glory to the God of truth and peace.

Stoke Newington,
March 25, 1747.

T H E

T H E

Rational FOUNDATION, FORM, and ORDER

O F A

CHRISTIAN CHURCH,

Confirmed and improved :

B Y T H E

Directions and examples of the NEW TESTAMENT.

S E C T I O N I.

Reason and revelation agree to require social religion.

I. **M**AN is an intellectual and sociable being, and he owes honour and worship to God his creator, in his social as well as his single capacity: He owes also assistance to his fellow-creatures, in the affairs of religion, as well as in those of the natural and civil life. Social religion is therefore the duty of every man, where he can meet with such fellow-worshippers, as to lay a foundation for amicable union in the same acts of worship, and for mutual help in religious concerns: And these three following reasons, among others, oblige him to it.

1. As he is bound to express to God in secret, and alone, what sense he has of the divine being, attributes, and government, so he is obliged to join with others, and publicly to declare to the world, what an awful and honourable apprehension he has of the same things: And this, that he may do honour to God amongst men, or glorify his name amongst his fellow-creatures; which secret religion cannot do. This is the chief end with regard to God, for which man's very nature is made sociable, and for which he is constituted by providence in human society. This is the first spring, and the perpetual foundation, of all social and public religion: For this end, social honours paid to God shall be everlasting. This is practi-

tified in the society of holy angels, those "sons of God, who sang together, and shouted for joy, when the foundations of the earth were laid; and who met together at certain seasons, to present themselves before God." *Job xxxviii. 7. and i. 6. and ii. 1.* This is required in our world of sinful men; so it will be, doubtless, in the world of separate spirits, who are described as a church, or religious assembly. *Heb. xii. 13.* And so in the world of the resurrection, when the high praises of God and the lamb shall be for ever on their tongues.

2. Man, in his single capacity, is obliged to perform acts of secret religion to God, because, in that capacity, he wants many favours from God; such as health, safety, food, raiment, &c. He is always receiving some of these favours, and always waiting for more. And so also every man, in his social capacity, for the same reason, is under obligation to perform acts of public or social religion; viz. prayer for public mercies wanted, such as good governors, peace, plenty, civil and religious liberty, &c. praise for public mercies received, and a profession of his hope of public blessings, which he expects at the hands of God. If there were no other reasons for social religion to be found, yet I think the obligation of it would stand firm upon these two pillars. But I add,

3. It is a necessary and most effectual means of maintaining religion in this our world. Several persons, with united zeal, counsel, and strength, can do much toward the encouragement and assistance of each other: The elder, and more knowing, may instruct the ignorant; and all may strengthen each other's hands in the things of God and godliness. They may defend each other against injuries, reproaches, and the shame of singularity, and join in all proper practices to keep a sense of divine things lively and warm at their own hearts, and to excite others to the same practices of piety and goodness. Thus social religion appears with evidence to be the duty of mankind.

II. There are but two ways whereby God teaches us religion; that is, by the light of nature, which he has planted in men, and the light of revelation, which, in various ways, and in different ages of the world, he has communicated to men. And accordingly, religion is distinguished into natural and revealed. By each of these methods of teaching, men may be instructed in social as well as personal godliness, and learn to perform the several parts and duties of it, according to their different extent of instruction.

As revealed religion in general acknowledges natural religion for its foundation, so all the parts of social, as well as personal religion, whether doctrine or duty, worship or order, so far as they are revealed and prescribed in the word of God, are still founded on principles of natural light and reason. Whatsoever therefore revelation has added, is but some positive or supernatural structure upon that foundation, without the opposition or contrariety to any parts thereof; for it is God himself that teaches us by the light of nature and reason; and we can never suppose that, by revelation, he will give us instructions which are contrary to the very principles of reason, and to those fundamental lessons of religion which he has written in our natures.

Human reason is the first ground and spring of all human religion. Man is obliged to religion because he is a reasonable creature. Reason directs and obliges us not only to search out and practise the will of God, as far as natural conscience will lead us, but also to examine, receive, and obey, all the revelations which come from God, where we are placed within the reach of their proper evidences. Wherein-
soever

soever revelation gives us plain and certain rules for our conduct, reason itself obliges us to submit and follow them. Where the rules of duty are more obscure, we are to use our reason to find them out, as far as we can, by comparing one part of revelation with another, and making just and reasonable inferences from the various circumstances and connexions of things. In those parts or circumstances of religion where revelation is silent, there we are called to betake ourselves to reason again, as our best guide and conductor. And let it be observed, that there are many instances also, wherein we are instructed to pay the same honours to God, and fulfil the same duties to men, in the practice of public as well as private religion, both by the light of reason and the light of revelation: For God, who knows the weakness of our intellectual powers, has been graciously pleased to give us a shorter, plainer, and easier discovery of many rational and moral truths and duties by revelation, which would have been very tedious and tiresome, as well as much more difficult, for the bulk of mankind, to have ever found out and ascertained by their own reasonings.

III. When we have received upon just evidence the new testament, as a revelation sent us from heaven, then our own reason and conscience oblige us to search in these writings, what new doctrines God has there proposed to our faith, and what new duties to our practice. And here, in our search after the things that relate to our personal religion, we shall find several sublime and glorious truths to be believed concerning the blessed trinity, the Father, the Son and the holy Spirit; and almost all the oeconomy of our salvation revealed to us, above and beyond what the light of reason can ever discover, or so much as surmise. We shall here find also the duties of faith, in the name, and blood, and righteousness, of the Son of God, for the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons; hope in his resurrection; subjection to his government; offering up our addresses of prayer and thanksgiving to God the Father, in his name; seeking the influences of the blessed Spirit, to sanctify our souls; waiting for the return of *Christ* from heaven, and for our own resurrection to eternal life. All these, I say, we shall find revealed and prescribed, over and above the duties discovered by reason. And besides these, we have the institution of the two sacraments, to be ever celebrated by christians, as memorials and pledges of some of those duties and blessings.

And it is not at all to be wondered at, that the gospel should require of us the additional belief and practice of such doctrines and duties in our personal religion, as the light of nature knows nothing of; because the very design of the gospel was to restore sinful man to the favour and likeness of God, which the light of nature, or the law of natural religion, could not do: The nations of the earth, and the men of the brightest reason among them, in long successions of ages, had made sufficient experiments of the practical insufficiency of human reason for that divine purpose.

But when we come to enquire what rules *Christ* has laid down for our conduct in social religion, distinct from these evangelical doctrines and personal duties, here we shall find far the greatest number of the same things which are prescribed to us by the holy scripture, or at least represented as the practices of the apostles and primitive christians, to be also prescribed by the light of nature; we shall find them to be such practices, or rules of conduct, as upon the supposed revelation of the christian doctrine and sacraments, human reason and prudence would, for the most part, lead us to perform.

And we may take notice by the way, that the chief peculiarities of the gospel in faith and practice, so far as relates to our personal religion, are much more plainly

and expressly dictated to us in scripture, by way of direct and explicit revelation and command ; whereas the affairs that relate only to social religion, excepting the sacraments, are, for the most part, hinted to us in a way of narrative, and are to be drawn out by inferences ; wherein much more is left to the exercises of our own reasoning powers, than in the matters of personal faith and practice.

IV. I would ask leave to observe here, that it is a fashionable and modish thing now-a-days, to represent the whole religion of *Christ*, whether personal or social, as little more than the mere religion of nature, revised and reformed from the corruptions of the sinful and degenerate nations, both *jewish* and *gentile* ; which opinion I can never assent to, so far as it regards the peculiar evangelical and glorious truths and duties, which relate more immediately to our personal religion, to our salvation and eternal life in the world to come : Yet, in matters that relate to the constitution and government of christian churches, whose chief design is to hold forth and maintain our religion publicly and visibly in this world, I am not afraid to say, that there is a most happy correspondency and similarity between the dictates of the light of nature, and the prescriptions of the new testament almost all the way.

In this affair revelation does not add a great deal of new duty beyond what reason would teach us, as very proper to maintain natural religion in the public profession of it. This will sufficiently appear in the following particulars.

S E C T I O N II.

Instances of the agreement of reason and revelation in social religion.

I. **W** Heresoever public and social religion is to be maintained, the light of reason teaches us, that several persons, who profess the same religion, must sometimes meet together, to celebrate the solemnities, rites, and ordinances thereof, and to worship God according to the rules of it. When this religion is professed by great multitudes, or by whole nations, it is not possible they should all be convened together in one place, so as to join frequently in the same acts of worship, to offer their united prayers or praises to God, in a regular and rational manner, and with conveniency and edification to such a vast assembly. In such a case therefore, it is necessary, that they should be separated into distinct societies, for the same purpose.

And does not the new testament sufficiently indicate these things to us, as relating to the social religion of christians ? Do we not find them frequently met together in the history of the *Acts* of the apostles ; that “with one mind and one mouth they may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ* ;” as in *Rom. xv. 6*. Are not such assemblies continually mentioned and encouraged in the epistles ? And are not christians exhorted to maintain this custom, and “not to forsake the assembling of themselves together ?” *Heb. x. 25*. Do we not find the christian converts of the same country divided into particular congregations, which are called churches, who meet together for this purpose ? The church at *Corinth* ; the church at *Philippi* ; the churches of *Galatia* : *1 Cor. xvi. 1*. The seven churches of *Asia* : *Rev. i. 11*. All the churches of the saints. *1 Cor. xiv. 33*.

II. The light of nature and reason teaches, that where persons join together for any religious service, they must be agreed in the main and most important points that relate to it. “How can two walk together except they be agreed ?” *Amos iii. 3*.
For

For otherwise perpetual jarring and confusion of opinions and practices would arise in the very worship itself, which would destroy all the delight, the harmony, and decency of it. A worshipper of the true God cannot join in natural religion with a worshipper of idols.

And yet, it is not every little difference in sentiment and opinion about the true God, or his worship, that is sufficient to exclude persons from the same religious society, where their agreement is so great, as that the chief ends of public worship may be happily maintained. Therefore *Abraham* and *Melchisedec* might join in the same worship of the one true God, though *Abraham* was taken into a peculiar covenant with special promises, and *Melchisedec* practised religion upon the ancient principle and dispensation of his father *Noah*. *Gen.* xiv. 18, 19, 20, 22. So *Abraham* worshipped God with *Abimilech*, the king of the *Philistines*, upon the same general principle, and they made a covenant, and sware together by the true God. *Gen.* xxi. 22—31.

And does not the new testament teach us the same practice, viz. that where persons would be united in christian worship and religious society, they must agree in their religion so far at least, as to make a credible profession of their being the sincere disciples of *Christ*, and must make known their agreement in all the necessary principles of christianity*. They must profess not only the one true God, but faith in *Jesus Christ*, the Lord, in his most important characters and offices, together with such repentance of sin, and such a visible practice of holiness, as may give reason to hope their profession is sincere. In the primitive times they “confessed their faith, and then shewed their works,” *Acts* xix. 18. and thereby proved their profession to be sincere, and their faith to be a “true or living faith.” *James* ii. 17, 18. It was commanded that the “*Jews* should bring forth fruits meet for repentance,” in order to be admitted to *John*’s baptism. *Matth.* iii. 8. And surely then it must be required to the baptism of christianity, or an union with the disciples of *Christ* †. They are generally described to be such as worship God, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord, and profess that faith which worketh by love; which is the substance of christianity in a very few words.

And though there are, and will be, some lesser differences in sentiment among christians in all ages, and though they are as great as were between the *jewish* and the gentile converts in primitive times; yet the new testament teaches, that they may all unite in the same christian society, and “receive one another in the Lord; that is, to all the privileges of fellow-christians, and the fellowship of gospel-ordinances, even upon as large a foot as *Christ* has received them.” *Rom.* xiv. 3. and xv. 7. Whether they are strong or weak in the faith, they are to be thus received, without entangling their minds “with more doubtful and disputable things;” *Rom.* xiv. 1. that is, whether they eat herbs or flesh, or believe “some days were holy, or every day alike.” verses 3—5.

III. Again, The light of reason teacheth, that there must be a mutual consent, compact, or agreement, amongst such persons as profess the same religion, to walk according to the directions and dictates of it, and to assist and encourage, to join and

* Here it is not proper to divert so far from my subject, as to enter into a debate, how many of the christian doctrines are of absolute necessity to make a disciple of *Christ*, or a true christian: This is an endless controversy, according to the different opinions of men.

† Let it be observed, that in this, and other parts of my discourse, I speak only of adult persons, who are capable of professing their faith; being not willing to embarrass this discourse with the controversy relating to infants, their discipleship, or their baptism.

and support one another, in the profession and practice of it, as well as to meet and worship together at certain seasons, and a certain place. This engagement for mutual assistance is very necessary, for the support of any religion in the world; and without such an agreement as to time and place, a company of men cannot meet for any purpose whatsoever, either in things civil or religious*.

If there be any precise time, and any particular place, appointed for this purpose by divine revelation, reason immediately determines that we must meet at that time and that place: But where there is not any such divine direction, there the place and time must be concerted and agreed by those who are united in such a society; nor has any one person power to impose his will or humour upon the rest. The acts of religion must be all free and voluntary.

Now what saith the new testament in this case? The union, or mutual agreement among particular christians for this purpose, which is the bond of their society, is expressed by St. Paul, or, at least, it is included in that phrase "of receiving one another, as Christ has received us;" Rom. xv. 7. "that with one mouth we may glorify God." It is a mutual receiving one another "in the Lord." Rom. xvi. 2. The word is used to the same purpose, Rom. xiv. 1. and in other scriptures. If this agreement be not expressed so plainly in scripture as some persons might expect, it is because the very nature of things, and the reason of man, makes this mutual consent and agreement so necessary to keep up any public religion, that it was not needful for the scriptures to be more express or particular in the appointment of it.

As for the place of worship, there is none made sacred, or divinely appointed, under the new testament. *Jahn* iv. 21—24. "Neither in this mountain, *Gerizim*, nor at *Jerusalem*, shall they worship the Father; but the hour cometh, and now is at hand, when, without regard to any particular place, they shall be accounted true worshippers, who "worship God in spirit and truth." And therefore, some convenient place must be agreed upon by the society, since the new testament determines none.

As to the time, it is confessed that we christians have not so express and particular prescriptions of the seasons of worship as the *Jews* enjoyed, neither as to their weekly sabbath, or any other of their festivals: but there is sufficient evidence from sacred history, that the first day of the week was the usual season of public christian worship in the apostles times, and in the following ages; and the day was known among christians by the honourable title of the Lord's day, so far, that the observation of it was the characteristic, or distinguishing mark of a christian. Now since it was so early and so universally practised by the professors of christianity, we have just reason to think it was appointed by the inspired apostles, that christians should come together to worship God on that day, and give honour to their risen Saviour. *Acts* ii. 1, 4. *xx.* 7. *1 Cor.* xvi. 1, 2. *Rev.* i. 10. And that they should agree to come to worship at the same time, and the same place, is evident from *1 Cor.* xi. 20, 33. and xiv. 23. "The whole church were to be gathered together at one place, otherwise they were to tarry for one another till the chief part of them were come.

IV. Since mankind is mortal, and every human assembly will die away by degrees, unless it be supplied with new members, common reason directs every religious society to

* Where the magistrate takes upon him, whether with or without order from heaven, to appoint all the forms, times, and places of worship, and the people willingly consent to it, and obey the magistrate herein, this is an implicate agreement among themselves, and attains the same end, in some measure, though it may happen to infringe christian liberty.

to receive in new members, upon their appearance to be properly qualified, according to the rules of that religion, and the judgment of that society; that there may be a continuance of this religion in the world.

And in the same manner the light of nature, or reason, and common prudence, teach us also, that if the persons who have thus professed any particular religion, do either renounce it in principle or profession, or maintain, in a public and notorious manner, such a set of notions, or such a course of conversation, or of worship, as is inconsistent with it, this religious society will think it proper to cast such persons out of their fellowship, that they may not infect the rest, nor dishonour their religion: For what fellowship has light with darkness, a man of vice with the sons of virtue, a *turk* with a *jew*, or a pagan with a christian?

And does not the new testament represent to us the christian churches receiving new members on their profession of christianity? *Acts* ii. 41, 47. "They who gladly received the word were baptized; and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls: And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." And does not the apostle teach the churches to take care that they be kept pure, and free from scandal, by separating themselves from evil members, and by casting out those that depart from the truth, or are guilty of gross immoralities? *2 Thess.* iii. 6. "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly." *1 Cor.* v. 5, 11, 13. "When ye are gathered together, deliver such a one to *Satan**. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump: that is, put away from among yourselves that wicked person. If a man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, keep no company with such a one; no, not to eat." And those who deny the resurrection, and overthrow the faith of some, are delivered to *Satan*, and cast out of the church into the world, which is his kingdom, "that they may learn not to blaspheme." *1 Tim.* i. 19, 20. and *2 Tim.* ii. 17, 18.

Reason and christianity also join to inform us, that, upon the credible evidence of a sincere repentance, and a change of heart and life, such offender should be forgiven, and received into the religious society again: So the offending *corinthian* was forgiven, and received and restored again to the love and communion of the christian church there. See *2 Cor.* ii. 7—9.

V. It is evident to common reason, when such a voluntary religious society is instituted, the right of receiving or casting out members, or restoring them upon repentance, lies originally in the society itself, because the society itself is formed, and subsists, by the mutual compact of its own members; and whatsoever qualifications are required of persons, in order to become members of this body, it is the society itself that has an original right to judge whether the persons have these qualifications or no. It was upon the mutual acknowledgement of such qualifications, expressed or implied, that this society was first founded; and as a voluntary society, it must be maintained on the same foot, otherwise new members will be likely to be admitted, and imposed upon them, to the great dislike and injury of the society.

Indeed they may depute several particular persons of their number, whom they suppose better skilled therein, as elder and wiser, to act for the whole society, and particularly

* Whether the delivering an offender to *Satan*, in the primitive times, did include in it the infliction of any sore bodily disease, though it be probable, yet it is not certain, nor universally agreed; but I think it is agreed pretty universally, that such a one was cast out of the church, and delivered back again into the world, which is the kingdom of *Satan*; who is called in the scripture "the prince and the god of this world." *John* i. 4. *2 Cor.* iv. 4.

particularly to examine into the qualifications of persons, and the merits of the cause, when members are to be received, or to be cast out; but they should never renounce their own original right. They may also appoint any particular person to go before the rest in this matter, to give them his advice herein, to acquaint them what persons are fit to be received, and to pronounce the sentence of receiving them into the society, or excluding them from it, according to the evidence of their qualifications: And this, I presume, will be usually allowed to be the office of the fixed pastor, or president of the assembly, where there is such a president.

And does not the new testament generally give directions agreeable to this dictate of the light of nature? Does not St. Paul direct to the churches themselves his apostolic advices about receiving, casting out, or restoring members? See his advice to the church at *Rome*, *Rom.* i. 7. and xiv. 1. "Ye saints at *Rome*, receive him that is weak in faith." *Rom.* xv. 7. "Receive ye one another." *Rom.* xvi. 2. "Receive ye *Phebe* in the Lord as becometh saints *." See his advice to the *Corinthians*, *1 Cor.* v. 4. "In the name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, when ye are gathered together, deliver such a wicked man to *Satan*." verse 13. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." And in *2 Cor.* ii. 6. "this is called a punishment inflicted by many." And verses 7, 8, 10. "the church was taught and required to forgive him upon his evident repentance, to confirm their love towards him to the fellowship of the church.

It is granted indeed, when proper officers are chosen and fixed among them, it is by their ministrations, by their advice and direction, christian churches should usually exercise this discipline; and so the orders of *Christ* are directed to the angels of the churches. *Rev.* chapters ii. and iii. But the whole work of reformation and discipline there required, is such as eminently concerns the churches or people themselves, and not the pastors only.

It is also granted, that many times churches do commit the whole care of this matter into the hand of their ministers, as being usually fittest to judge of the profession made; but it ought never to be so entirely given into their hands, as to renounce the people's right of judging in these affairs. "*Diotrephes*, who loved to have the pre-eminence among them, assumed to himself the right of receiving and casting out members from the church; but he was severely reprov'd for his pride and usurpation, when he forbid his fellow-christians to receive brethren who were worthy." *3 John* 9, 10. Ministers may happen to prove so injudicious, or so negligent of enquiry into the profession and qualifications of persons to be admitted, so subject to prejudices, or so engaged in a party-quarrel, as to fill the church with such members as may be very contrary to the sentiments of the majority of the church; and if the people renounce their own right in this affair, they may thank themselves for such unhappy consequences.

I would add also, that if people entirely give up the right of admission and exclusion to the minister alone, they can never cast the minister himself out, if he be never so impious and immoral.

Having found the constitution of a christian church to be so conformable to the dictates of right reason, let us consider what are the acts of worship which are to be paid to God in public, and in what manner must they be performed; and we shall find the light of reason and the new testament happily agreeing here also.

VI.

* It is granted this text refers to *Phebe*, as a traveller at *Rome*, and desiring to hold occasional communion with the christian church there; but the reason of things is the same, or stronger, with regard to receiving persons into a fixed and constant communion with any church: There must be still a mutual agreement.

VI. The several acts of worship which the light of nature directs us to pay to the great God, are such as these: To adore him with all humility, on the account of his glorious perfections, and his wonderful works of power and wisdom; to join together in prayer to God for such blessings as we stand in need of; to confess our sins, and ask the forgiveness of them; to acknowledge his mercies, and give thanks to his goodness; and to sing with the voice to his honour and praise. The light of nature directs us also to seek continually a further acquaintance with the nature and will of that God whom we worship, in order to practise our duty the better, and please our creator; and to provide some way for the further instruction of those who are ignorant of that religion, and come into their assemblies to be instructed; and for the exhortation of the people to fulfil their duty to God and their neighbours. And if there are any special rites or ceremonies, such as belong to social worship, the light of nature tells us, that here they ought to be performed.

And does not the new testament set all these matters before us so plainly and frequently, with regard to christianity, that I need not stand to cite chapter and verse, where these things are practised by the apostles, and the primitive christians, in their assemblies? Here adorations, prayers, and thanksgivings, are offered up to God, but in the name of *Jesus*, as their only mediator: Here their addresses are made to God with one mind, and with one mouth, to the glory of God, who is the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*: Here psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, are sung to the honour of the creator and redeemer: Here the word of God is preached for the instruction of the ignorant or unbelievers, who come into the christian assemblies, that sinners or infidels may be converted, and christians edified, and exhorted to persist in the faith, and improve in holiness. *1 Cor. xiv. 23.* Here the great ordinance of christian communion, the Lord's supper, is celebrated, by distributing and receiving bread and wine, and eating and drinking in remembrance of their common Saviour and of his death. *1 Cor. xi. 20—26.* As for the other ordinance, viz. baptism, it being not so properly an act of public or social religion, I do not find it is any where required to be done in public; and though it might be rendered more extensively useful by that means for some purposes, yet it may be performed in private houses, or in retired places, as it sometimes was in the primitive ages.

VII. Since there ought to be such public ministrations performed as I have described, our own reason and observation of mankind sufficiently informs us, that all persons are not capable of leading these public religious services; viz. they are not all fit to speak usefully in the name of men to God, in prayer or praise, or to teach the things of God to others, in a profitable and becoming manner, nor with decency and exactness to celebrate all the rights and ceremonies of any religion. Reason itself therefore directs us that there should be one or more persons chosen in every religious assembly, who should be wise and prudent, grave, sober and faithful, and better skilled in the things of religion than others; and who should be capable in a more clear and happy manner to express them, that he, or they, may go before the congregation, and lead them in their several acts of worship; that they may give instruction to the rest, and with their lips offer up their common addresses to God, and celebrate the sacred rites of their religion.

For this purpose reason teaches us, that if a person so qualified be not found in any particular religious society, they ought to seek one elsewhere. And persons who have superior skill in this religion, should train up others, from time to time, in

the articles of their religion, that they may be able to instruct the people, and become more capable of this public service.

If it be enquired, what the light of reason directs about the investiture of such a person in this office? I know of nothing more, but that the people should make all due enquiry concerning his qualifications; that they should ask the opinion or advice of other teachers, who are better skilled in this religion than themselves, where it can be conveniently obtained; and when they themselves also have had sufficient experience of his abilities, and knowledge of his virtues, they should agree to chuse him into this office; and that he himself solemnly should accept of it; and devote, or give up, himself to it; and that he should be with great solemnity recommended, by public prayers, to the blessing of God, in the discharge of it. This is all the investiture that reason seems to require*. And this man, thus set apart to the sacred work, should continually endeavour to improve his qualifications, and render his religious services more and more useful to the people, and take due care, as a faithful overseer, that the people maintain the practice of the religion they profess.

Reason itself also teaches us, that if there be any persons in the assembly who give sufficient evidence of their being inspired, or taught of God, and of having any divine commission to instruct the people; these persons ought eminently to be received as teachers, and employed in such religious service.

Let us now see what the new testament, or the rule of christianity directs in this point.

This is sufficiently evident, that scripture has appointed such a set of men, or such officers in the christian church, as may lead divine worship in their assemblies, and may celebrate the institutions of the gospel among them. We find their names and titles frequently mentioned as pastors, teachers, elders, bishops, shepherds, &c. We find the duties of their station often spoken of, the characters and qualification of the persons described, their support provided for, and the people's duty to them enjoined. And since the church is to continue to the end of the world, or till *Christ* comes again from heaven, it is plain there must be always such persons to minister in holy things in every age.

In the very primitive times there was a great variety of talents and capacities, for the ministrations of christian worship, conferred by inspiration upon those who embraced the religion of *Christ*: These were taught of God in a more immediate manner †: And where these extraordinary gifts were numerous, either they needed no other preachers, teachers, or ministers, always supposing some wise person amongst them to be a *prophet*, a president, or chairman, who, by natural rules of prudence and order, should keep their various performances within the limits of decency and edification; or, at least, they were not yet furnished with particular officers, being then but in an imperfect state as to regular order. Such was the *corinthian* church:

And

* According to the light of nature and reason, no man should be made a teacher, or president, or leader in any voluntary religious society, but by the consent and agreement of that society, to put themselves under his instructions and care. No civil powers have authority, by the law of nature, in these matters of religion and conscience; nor can any man be made an officer in any society, without his own free consent: And as all religious affairs regard either the honour of God or converse with him, so an address to God for a blessing, is a natural and reasonable solemnity, that should attend the entrance into a religious office.

† These gifts were so much distributed in that day among the christians at *Jerusalem*, that even the deacons, who were appointed to take care of the poor, had such extraordinary gifts, and exercised them now and then in teaching the people as evangelists. See *Acts* vi. 2, 3.

Sect. II. Reason and revelation agree in social religion.

11

And where any apostle or evangelist was present, he is reasonably supposed to preside; or, in his absence, he sometimes gives direction for their conduct, as though he were present. 1 Cor. v. 3, 4.

But in other churches, where these gifts were but few, the chief possessors of them, and especially the early and more experienced converts, were chosen out to be elders, or guides, and leaders of their worship, pastors, or teachers, according to their peculiar talents of exhortation, or of instruction: And they were sometimes called overseers, that is, bishops, having an oversight of the people, and their behaviour, being reasonably supposed to know more of the will of *Christ* than the common people, and to be more solicitous for the honour of christianity, and for its preservation.

It is probable that sometimes these elders, or overseers, which words are used promiscuously in several places of the new testament*, might be pointed out by the direction of a spirit of prophecy, or by the gift of discernment of spirits, by the apostles, or other inspired men, in that day, as *Timothy* was pointed out by prophecy, to be an evangelist, 1 Tim. i. 18. and iv. 14. And in this sense the apostles and evangelists, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Timothy* and *Titus* might perhaps, by the direction of the holy Spirit, nominate the persons fit to be ordained elders in the churches, and, upon the consent of the churches, might ordain or appoint them for that purpose. Acts xiv. 23. 1 Tim. v. 22. Tit. i. 5. And perhaps this is the reason why it is said of the elders of *Ephesus*, that the holy Ghost had made them overseers. Acts xx. 17, 28. But it is hardly to be supposed that any persons were made rulers, teachers or overseers of any church of serious christians, without the consent of the society, who were to be taught and governed by them in matters relating to their eternal interests.

Even when an apostle was to be chosen in the room of *Judas*, the hundred and twenty disciples, of whom eleven were apostles, joined in the choice of two persons, out of which the lot determined one to be an apostle. Acts i. 15, 23. Deacons, who manage the secular affairs of the church, were chosen by the people. Acts vi. 3. And still more reasonable it is, that elders, or bishops, who have the care of their souls, should be chosen by them who want and desire their instructions in such important concerns.

In following ages, when these extraordinary gifts ceased in the churches, it is more evident from the histories of those times, that their overseers, or bishops, were chosen by the people. And the characters of them are given us at large, and very particularly, in two places of scripture. 1 Tim. iii. 1—13. and Tit. i. 5, 6. And certainly this is left upon record, that we might be directed in such a choice to the end of the world, as well as to give directions to *Timothy* and *Titus* in the performance of their extraordinary office at this time.

As for the investiture of men with this office, the new testament gives us some notices that they were set apart by solemn prayer and fasting, and generally with laying on of the hands of the persons who were inspired, or possessed of some superior character. Whether this rite were designed to communicate any new gifts, or to pronounce an inspired and effectual blessing on their ministrations; or whether

C 2

it

† It may not be improper in this place to point out the chief scriptures where these characters are used promiscuously, and seem to denote one and the same office. Acts xx. 17. "From *Miletus* *Paul* sent to *Ephesus*, and called the elders of the church. But in verse 28. St. *Paul* calls these very persons overseers, ἐπισκοπος, bishops. Tit. i. 5. "Ordains elders in every city." verse 6. "If any be blameless." For, in verse 7. "a bishop must be blameless." 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder; feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof, the bishoprick thereof, ἐπισκοποιήσατε. But our english translators have generally taken care to keep the word "bishop" for the most part out of sight, where it is applied to presbyters, or elders, in the greek.

it was only retained in the christian church as it had been an ancient rite, used almost from the earliest ages of mankind, on several occasions, particularly in the solemn benediction of a person, or in the prayer for a blessing on him, or appointment of him to any special service, I am not able to determine*: This is certain, that the rite of imposition of hands has something natural in it, when we pray for a blessing to descend on any particular person, and more especially at his entrance into an office; as it were to point him out in a visible manner to God and the world. Good old *Jacob* laid his hands on *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, when he blessed them. *Gen.* xlviii. 14—18. And in *Deut.* xxxiv. 9. *Moses* laid his hands on *Joshua*, as his successor. The children of *Israel* also laid their hands on the *Levites*, at their dedication to the service of the tabernacle. *Numb.* viii. 10. But as there are different opinions on this subject, I dismiss it, without any other determination than this, that it seems to be a sort of natural ceremony, an innocent and ancient rite at such seasons; though I do not see sufficient proof of the certain necessity of it. Even as lifting up the hands to heaven, in prayer for a blessing on one's self, is a sort of natural rite or gesture, used by *jews* and heathens, and not necessary to be used in every solitary or personal prayer. The laying on the hands on another person, when we are praying for a blessing on him, seems to be of the same kind, viz. a sort of natural rite or gesture, much used in the old testament and the new; and though it is not plainly made necessary on every such occasion, yet it must still be acknowledged it was often, if not always, used in the primitive and inspired times, when either gifts or offices were conferred by some particular persons upon others.

And it certainly adds a sort of solemnity to the work; and it has so much of countenance from scripture, that I think it cannot be called a mere human and arbitrary invention of men.

This is certain, that such persons were to be trained up in a succession for this service in the churches. "*Timothy* was required to commit to faithful men the things that he had heard and learned of *St. Paul*, that they might be able to teach others also. 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. "And these persons were to give up themselves continually to the word and prayer, as the apostles did," *Acts* vi. 4. and to excite and stir up their talents for instruction and edification, to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and give themselves wholly to them, that their profiting might appear to all. For if this be required of so extraordinary a person as *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 13—16. much more reasonably is it required of those who have no extraordinary gifts.

I might further add, that these teachers and ministers of the gospel are required in the new testament to be faithful, diligent, and zealous in the work of *Christ*, "willingly taking the care, or oversight, of the religious concerns of the people, in instructing and overseeing the flock, and watching over them for their spiritual good, as well as going before them in all acts of holiness, and being examples to all other christians in word, in conversation, in faith, in charity, and in purity from all sin. verse 12."

* *Timothy*, a young evangelist, had the hands of the elders, that is, "the presbytery, laid upon him." 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. "And perhaps, at the same time, he was blessed by the hands of *St. Paul* with extraordinary gifts." 2 *Tim.* i. 6. "And he himself, an evangelist, was ordered to lay hands suddenly on no man." 1 *Tim.* v. 22. It is a question indeed whether *Timothy*, or the presbytery, could confer any extraordinary gifts or blessings; it is more probable, for many reasons, that this belonged only to the apostles; and then this their imposition of hands could not be designed for the conferring of extraordinary gifts; but still it might be used to pronounce a prophetic blessing on the preacher, which no uninspired person could do; or finally, it might be the ordinary form of benediction, or of institution to an office.

SECTION

S E C T I O N III.

A brief enquiry how far the modes of the mission, or ordination, of primitive ministers, are our rule now.

UPON this short survey of things, under this head, give me leave first to make one observation, and then consider the enquiry proposed.

The observation is this: Various were the affairs and regulations of the primitive churches, relating to their several officers, whether apostles, evangelists, bishops, pastors, teachers, prophets, elders, &c. and in the nomination of those officers, whether by *Jesus Christ* himself, by prayer and lot, by inspiration of the Spirit, by prophecy, by gifts of discerning spirits, or by the choice of the people, &c. And in their ordination, or mission, by fasting, and by imposition of hands, as well as prayer: And whether this were performed by the apostles, prophets, presbyters, or elders, or evangelists, &c. Now all these things at that time were so much directed, governed, influenced, determined, and transacted by extraordinary gifts, and the inspired persons who possessed them, that I cannot find, in the new testament, any one instance of the choice and mission, appointment or investiture, of any ordinary officer, or officers, who were not of the extraordinary kind; and therefore these things cannot, in every point, be rules or patterns for all following times.

If any one here object, that if we suppose the formation, ordination, and mission of ministers, to be so described in the *Acts* of the apostles, as not to give following ages an exact rule or pattern for their ordinary practice; why may we not also suppose some of the doctrines and duties of personal christianity described in the gospel, to belong only to extraordinary times?

The answer is easy: viz. That mankind are to be saved through all ages of christianity in the same way, by the same gospel, the same doctrines and duties. But the preachers of this gospel may not be furnished nor ordained the same way, when extraordinary commissions, extraordinary gifts, and powers, are ceased: For it is apparent, that these extraordinary preachers and governors of the church mingled the exercise of their extraordinary powers with some of their ordinary ministrations.

Hence it comes to pass, that it is so difficult a question, and so exceeding hard to affirm with exactness and certainty, how many of these officers, and of these solemn rites and actions, were designed by *Christ* to be continued in the following ordinary occasions of these churches, when extraordinary gifts should cease; and how many of these forms are to be practised in all succeeding ages. Most of the learned and inquisitive men who have written since, have greatly differed in their opinions of this matter, and left many things therein difficult, or dubious, after all their laborious comments.

Let us enquire then what there is of all these things, that is certain and necessary in our age, and is not subject to this occasion of doubting which I have mentioned.

1. This seems certain by the light of nature and reason, that christian assemblies, as well as any others, in ordinary as well as extraordinary times, should have a teacher, to instruct the ignorant in knowledge, and make known to the church the mind and will of God in his word: They should have an exhorter, to stir up the people to the practice of their duty; a man of prayer, to address God in their public devotions; an overseer, or bishop, to take charge of the flock, to inspect the manners of

of the people, and watch for the good of their souls; a president, to be chairman in their assemblies, to keep up order there; and a grave and skilful person fit to administer the rites and seals of the christian religion. Now all these characters, capacities, and talents, are often contained in one single person, who may be sufficient for a small church; or, perhaps, in two or three persons, for the supply of larger churches.

2. I think we may take it also for a certainty, that where God doth not interpose to point out the teachers, or overseers, in any christian church, by inspiration, there is no person or persons, either in the church or state, who have any rightful power, derived either from reason or scripture, to impose a teacher, or overseer, on any assembly of christians whatsoever, without their own consent; for it is they themselves must give an account for their own souls to God; and therefore, they must have a right to chuse who shall teach and lead them in matters of religion. Conscience is too sacred a thing to be imposed upon by fallible men, and the soul is too valuable to have its concerns intrusted with any persons, without our own agreement.

And though the choice or consent of the churches may not be so particularly mentioned in scripture, when elders or bishops were ordained among them, by persons who were inspired, yet reason itself supposes it; and their extraordinary gifts from the holy Spirit, proved and required the duty of submission and consent in the people, even if they had not a hand in the first chusing of them. The great God could do them no wrong by appointing elders, or bishops, for them, in an immediate way, or by inspiration.

But when extraordinary gifts ceased, we find many testimonies in the early writers, to the consent of the people in the choice of their church-officers. The scripture itself makes it evident, that deacons were chosen by the people in primitive times. *Acts* vi. 3. "Brethren, look ye out from among you seven men," &c. verses 5—7. And these were to be intrusted only with the money, or temporal things of the church. And nature, and universal custom, teach us, that physicians and lawyers, who are intrusted with the care of the bodies and estates of men, are not imposed on us by others, but are chosen by the persons who intrust them. If I would learn philosophy, or any science, art, or trade, I have a natural right to chuse who shall instruct me in it. Even children are allowed to chuse their own guardians; and boys, who are apprentices, to chuse their own masters. And doth not reason loudly proclaim this truth, that the guides of our souls in religion ought to be chosen by ourselves when we are at the age of man, as being a matter of dearer and more divine importance than any other; and an affair in whose success none can be so much concerned as ourselves; for it is of ourselves that God will expect a final account. Let us take heed then to our own conduct in this matter, and remember, that the new testament has never appointed any uninspired men to chuse pastors or teachers for a whole assembly of people, and impose them upon the assembly, or upon any particular members thereof, against their will.

3. It is certain also, that due care ought to be taken that the persons be fitly qualified who are chosen into this office or ministry: And though private christians have a right to chuse their ministers, and may best judge of the general suitableness of their talents to their own edification, yet they are seldom so fit judges of the learned qualifications of ministers, as those who have been some years ministers, pastors, or teachers themselves, whether of the same or of neighbouring churches; and therefore, reason tells us, it is generally most proper that some of these more knowing and experienced men should be consulted in this matter; and, after due examination
and

and knowledge of the person, their approbation be obtained to encourage the choice of the people, where it can be conveniently had : And therefore, in scripture, as I shall shew immediately, we never find any ordinations by the people, alone without superior helps ; nor should it ever be done, where such helps can be obtained.

4. May I not add, It is certain also, that there ought to be some sacred solemnity attending the investiture or ordination of every such officer ? This has always been done in all nations, both in civil and sacred affairs. This ought to be done by a solemn and public dedication of himself to this service, with the prayers of the church concurring to seek a divine blessing on him therein. Reason itself dictates this as a most proper practice. And it is as certain, that the union and assistance of a few other ministers, both in prayer and exhortation, make a sort of beautiful harmony, and add solemn weight to this transaction of dedicating a person to God : They are generally better capable of offering up the prayers of the society to God on such an occasion : They are best able to give a word of counsel or advice to the new minister and to the people ; which is a ceremony that should usually attend such an investiture into this office ; for " every thing is sanctified by the word and prayer : " 1 *Tim.* iv. 5. And this will have a tendency to maintain a happy union and correspondence between different assemblies of the same religion, whether the ministers put their hands on the head of the new minister or no.

5. This is also certain, that the imposition of hands, or any ordination whatsoever, by bishops, or presbyters, can never be absolutely necessary to make a new presbyter or bishop ; for the Lord *Jesus Christ* would never leave the subsistence or propagation of his churches, or the virtue or efficacy of his word and his sacraments, to depend on the uninterrupted succession of any office or officer, bishop or presbyter, to be transmitted from hand to hand, by any necessary forms of ordination, from the apostles days down to our's ; for then it would be impossible for any church, or even for any particular christian, to know whether ever they have had an authentic minister, whether they have ever received the gospel truly, or partook of any true sacrament, or have any just hope of salvation ; because it is impossible for plain christian, or even for any ministers in our age, so far from the apostles, to be absolutely assured, that such ordinations have been rightly transmitted through sixteen hundred years, without any one interruption. And I might add, the only evidence and proof that any persons pretend to have of such a succession, is through the papal chair, which is attended with abundant uncertainties and impossibilities ; as has been often shewn by protestant writers.

There is another reason also why the ordination, or imposition of hands, by either bishops or elders, or any superior character, cannot be absolutely necessary to make a minister, or ordain a pastor, in a particular church ; and that is, that a whole nation may be corrupted, and every bishop and elder therein may be departed from the faith and practice of the gospel, as it was in *England* in the days of popery ; then, if a certain number of good men join themselves in a church, or voluntary society, for the sake of reformation, and enjoying pure worship, they can never have a minister settled and ordained among them, while these corrupt clergy around them refuse their assistance, and even forbid and oppose it to their utmost. But our blessed Lord would never leave his people, who desire reformation, under such circumstances of impossibility to be reformed. There must therefore, in some cases, be a power of ordination vested in the minister and people themselves, without the absolute necessity of recourse to others. And this is called a mere independent, or a popular ordination ; as that by bishops is called episcopal, and that by elders, presbyterian.

6. Will

6. Will it not follow, from all these premises, that when there are no inspired persons in a church, and the christian assemblies are left to the ordinary ways of supporting themselves from age to age, and of supplying themselves with officers for their edification, these church-affairs are to be conducted by such plain rules and dictates of the light of nature and common prudence, as are mentioned before, and which, in the days of extraordinary gifts, were never contradicted; though those extraordinary gifts, at that time, might sometimes supersede the necessity of some of these prudential rules: Yet always keeping an eye to the conduct of the primitive churches, so far as the extraordinary persons and gifts, orders and actions, in those times, did not plainly interpose, to super-add any thing above and beyond what was practicable and proper in ordinary cases; and always taking care that nothing be imposed as necessary, but what scripture, and the plain reason of things, have evidently made so; and managing all other prudential concerns by the joint opinion and content of the society itself? I think, if we act by this rule, we cannot displease *Christ* our Lord, even though we should happen to mistake in some little formalities.

7. Though the people in the uninspired ages of the church must always chuse their own officers, and perhaps, in some uncommon cases, may ordain them alone; yet, since in all the rules, directions, and examples, which we have in the new testament, about the ordination or mission of any new officers, there is mention made of some superior person or persons, apostles or evangelists, elders, prophets, or teachers, appointing or ordaining them, or praying for them, or conferring gifts upon them, or committing the gospel to them, or laying hands on them; and since there is not any one appointment, mission, or ordination, either of deacons or ministers, that I know of, in the new testament, without some one or more of these things, I am ready to think this might be so far an example to us, as that we should not too easily and readily encourage the ordinations of new ministers, to be performed totally and merely by the people, without some person or persons of superior characters, that is, bishops or elders, engaged with them in this work; except only, as was said before, in cases of such necessity, where the concurrence and assistance of such elders as are found in the faith, and pious in life, could not be obtained. Though popular ordinations may be valid, and may be sometimes necessary, yet it seems more regular, according to scripture, to have usually the active concurrence and assistance of some elders therein; and where their assistance may be obtained, I cannot call it a regular ordination without them.

8. And in the last place, I would say, that since there are some texts in the new testament, wherein single persons, either apostles, as *Paul* and *Barnabas*, ordained ministers in the churches; or evangelists, as *Timothy* and *Titus*; and since other missions or ordinations are intimated to be performed by several persons, viz. prophets, teachers, elders, or a presbytery; as in *Acts* xiii. 1. and *1 Tim.* iv. 14. Since there is sometimes mention made of the imposition of hands in the mission of a minister, and sometimes no mention of it; and since it is evident, that in some cases popular ordinations are, and must be, valid, without any bishop or elder; I think none of these differences should be made a matter of violent contest among christians; nor ought any hard words to be pronounced against each other by those of the episcopal, presbyterian, or independent way. Surely all may agree thus far, that various forms or modes, seeming to be used in the mission or ordination of ministers in primitive times, may give a reasonable occasion, or colour, for sincere and honest searchers after truth to follow different opinions on this head; and do therefore demand our candid and charitable sentiments concerning those who differ from us.

And

And indeed, the chief ground of the differences between all christians in matters of ordination, is that wherewith I began this section; viz. that it is an uncertain thing, whether several of these particular modes and actions, in the furniture, mission, or ordination of a minister, which are mentioned in the books of the new testament, do really belong only to the extraordinary days of inspiration, or whether they must be imitated as our example, in all ordinary occurrences of the church; always supposing and maintaining, that none of these ceremonies or assistances from other ministers or elders, are always and absolutely necessary to the mission or ordination of a new minister; since there may be seasons wherein the concurrence of good bishops, ministers, or elders, cannot be obtained; at least, not with any tolerable conveniency, or without sending abroad to far distant nations.

S E C T I O N IV.

The rest of the instances wherein reason and revelation agree in matters of social worship.

BUT it is time now to proceed to the eighth instance of church-affairs, and shew how far the common sense and reason of mankind concur with the revelation of the new testament in this matter.

VIII. The light of reason further teaches us, that persons who are set apart for these religious services, and whose time and thoughts are much to be employed in them, that they may render public worship useful and entertaining to the people, and who have a charge to take care of the conversation of others as well as of their own, will not have much time to spare among the cares and businesses of this world, to provide themselves with necessary food and raiment, a comfortable subsistence, and the conveniencies of life; and yet it is proper they should be honoured and supported above the very lowest ranks of the people, lest their ministrations be brought into contempt by their poverty: And upon this account, in all ages and in all nations, the very light of reason has directed mankind to support and maintain their priests, or those that minister to them in things sacred.

And does not the new testament and the authority of our Saviour, by his apostles, decree and maintain the same thing, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14? "Do ye not know that they who minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple, and that both in *jewish* and gentile nations? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar; even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

But let it be observed also, that though christian ministers should be so supported in temporal things, that they may not labour under perpetual cares and daily anxieties, how to get bread and raiment for themselves and their families, and that they may maintain their proper authority in preaching, reproving and exhorting, and live above the fear or shame that may arise from poverty and dishonourable dependencies, yet there is no rule nor example in scripture that should raise them so far above the people in riches or grandeur, as to become lords of God's heritage, or tempt them to assume sovereign dominion over their conscience, faith or practice.

IX. With regard to the poor that happen to be joined to any religious societies whatsoever, reason and humanity dictate to us, that they ought to be maintained by

certain contributions of their neighbours, or the towns and cities wherein they dwell; for this is a matter of civil concernment, and a sort of natural duty to our fellows, as man is a sociable creature.

But if the civil society or place where they dwell, does not take care to maintain them, and especially if they are neglected, because they do not profess the established or national religion, reason tells us, it is then certainly the duty of those who are combined in that special religious society, to take care of their support. For what pretence can a man make to serious religion towards God, if he will not shew his love to his neighbour, and especially to one who loves the same God also? 1 *John* iii. 17, 18. Now that this provision for the poor may be managed with regularity, prudence, and success, the light of nature teaches us, that one or more persons of the society should be chosen, to collect such charitable contributions from the assembly, and to distribute it with equity, prudence and goodness, for the support of the poor?

And does not the new testament give a plain command, when the care of the poor of the church at *Jerusalem* was too burdensome for the apostles, or ministers of that congregation, to chuse out persons for this purpose, who were afterwards called deacons, *Acts* vi. 1—6? “When some of the widows were neglected in the daily ministration, or charitable supply, then the twelve apostles said to the multitude of the disciples, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.—Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you—men of honest report, full of the holy Ghost and of wisdom*, whom we may appoint over this business. And when they had chosen them, they set them before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” There are also particular directions given, what sort of persons should be chosen to this office of deacons; their characters are written down at large, 1 *Tim.* iii. 8—13. because it was designed to be a standing office in the christian church through all ages.

As the deacons are persons appointed by the new testament, to take care of the money collected by the church, for the supply of the table of the poor, so the same persons are very naturally and properly employed in christian churches, to take care also of all other contributions of the society, for the supply of the table of the minister, and of the Lord's table at the holy communion. With them also are entrusted other necessary expences and outward accommodations that belong to public worship.

X. I add yet further, the light of nature and reason teach us, that all the management of religious affairs in a society should be performed with a decency and dignity becoming the things of God; and with due regularity and order; for he is a God of order; with gentleness also and condescension, peace and love, for quarrels and fightings destroy religion, and break all the bonds of religious society.

And are we not taught the same things in the new testament? Are not christians continually called upon to “put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness,” *Coloss.* iii. 14. “to do all things without disputings and murmurings,” *Phil.* ii. 14.

* It is granted that the deacons then chosen at *Jerusalem* had extraordinary gifts. *Stephen* was a noble speaker, and might occasionally teach the gospel; *Philip* also was either a preacher then, or might use the office of a deacon well, and so grow up to an evangelist. *Acts* vi. 3, 8. and viii. 5—13. 26—36. and thus have power to baptize, verse 38. as is intimated in 1 *Tim.* iii. 13. But these powers or gifts did not arise from their office as deacons. Some of them had these gifts before, in common with multitudes of converts in the primitive times: And these gifts might perhaps fit them the better to discern, who were proper persons to be supported out of the churches stock, and to give a word in season occasionally to the poor, of whom they had the care. But the mere office of deacons, which consists in assisting the ministers to take care of feeding the poor, and of laying out the public money continues, when these extraordinary gifts are ceased, and the characters of persons, fit to be chosen do not necessarily include public preaching: Nor do we find *διδάσκων* or “aptness to teach,” mentioned among the characters of a deacon.

ii. 14. "to do all their things with charity," 1 Cor. xvi. 14. "And that all things should be done with decency and in order," 1 Cor. xiv. 40? And that as they ought to keep peace at home and in the "church of Christ, they should give no offence, neither to jews nor gentiles, but as far as possible live peaceably with all men." 1 Cor. x. 32. Rom. xii. 18.

In the last place, the light of nature and reason also acquaints us, that when persons who belong to one religious society travel to distant places, they should have some recommendations by epistles to other societies, which are built upon the same religious principles, that they may be received into their assemblies, and enjoy all the parts and privileges of worship and friendly society together with them? This is called occasional communion, to distinguish it from that fixed and constant communion, which the agreed members of the same religious society constantly enjoy.

And here also the new testament very happily concurs with the dictates of reason and common prudence: For when primitive christians were called by providence to a distance from their own dwelling, and from that church with which they usually worshipped, they were recommended by letters unto other christian churches in the world, that they might be received by them into all the parts of christian fellowship. Such epistles St. Paul speaks of 2 Cor. iii. 1. he needed them not, though others stood in need of them: And such a recommendation had *Phebe*, a member of the church at *Cenchrea*, when she travelled to *Rome*. Rom. xvi. 1, 2. "I recommend unto you *Phebe* our sister, who is a servant of the church of *Cenchrea*, that you receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints." And such a recommendatory letter was written by the brethren of *Ephesus*, to commend *Apollos* to be received by the churches of *Achaia*. Acts xviii. 27. "The brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him."

S E C T I O N V.

Where revelation is silent, reason must direct.

THUS we have seen a variety of instances, wherein the rules of christianity and scripture, so far as relates to social religion, correspond with those which the light of reason and prudence would dictate to wise and sober men, engaged in a religious society. Some of these are represented to us in the new testament, as express commands; others we may draw by easy reasonings from the examples of the apostles and the primitive churches, as well as from the circumstances which are contained, either in the matters of fact, or in the exhortations that relate to them.

And here I would observe, that though right reason might guide us into most of the same practices, yet it is a vast advantage to us that we have so many of these things prescribed, intimated or approved by the inspired writings of the new testament: For so imperfect is our understanding, and so weak our judgment, that the reasonings of men, even of a single congregation, or their humours which go for reason, would not easily agree in the same methods and forms of management, and there would probably be a far greater variety of opinions, and greater difficulties in the conduct of church affairs, than now there are; though even now there are so many, that render the christian world a theater of perpetual contest: But it must still be acknowledged that one main spring of the controversy is, because the passions and pride and interests of men, will not suffer them to hearken either to reason or scripture.

Though scripture hath determined so many particulars in a perfect conformity to right reason, yet it must be confessed there are other things which relate to christian worship and order, which are past over in silence, or at least, are not mentioned and prescribed with such plainness and evidence in the word of God, as is sufficient to direct every single punctilio of our practice. It is the pretence of finding out in scripture every lesser particular piece of conduct in a christian church, even such as belongs to all religious societies, that has tempted men to run to the old testament, and enquire of *Moses* and *Aaron* for advice, where they could not find it expressly written in the new, and strangely to warp and pervert many texts of the new testament from their native and proper meaning.

Let it be granted then, that scripture is silent in some little particulars about social religion: But even here we are not left without any direction, nor are we sent to uncertain traditions to make up for the silence of scripture, but we are naturally remitted to the common reason of things and human prudence as our guide*. Yet always, as I said before, keeping our eye pointed toward the new testament, and forming our reasonings as far as possible on the same principles which seem to run through the social religion of the primitive times, so far as it did not depend on those extraordinary inspirations. Let us give also some instances of these.

I. Scripture does not tell us how many persons must go to make up a christian church: But reason will help us to answer this question, if we consider that the word "ecclesia" or church, properly signifies an assembly of people, and so it is used in the new testament, where it has no relation to a christian society, as among the heathens at *Ephesus*, *Acts* xix. 32, 39, 40. A very few therefore may be called an assembly, and may be sufficient to join together in christian fellowship, that they may partake of the Lord's supper, and carry on the face of public religion, when there are no other christians in the place where they dwell. And on the other hand, there should usually be no more in a church than can meet together in one place, can act as one assembly and join in social worship, in prayers and praises; for the apostle writing to the *Corinthians*, speaks twice of the whole church coming together in one place, *1 Cor.* v. 4. xi. 20. and xiv. 23. And the church of *Antioch* which was large met all together, *Acts* xiv. 27. Perhaps those words *Rom.* xv. 6, "that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God," may limit the number of a church, usually

* The "sufficiency and perspicuity of the scripture in things necessary to salvation," is not at all impeached by this concession; for 1. The determinations of some lesser affairs relating to public worship, or the conduct of christian societies, are not things necessary to the salvation of any particular person, or to the essence or being of a christian church, though they may be needful to it's well-being and it's comfortable and regular subsistence. 2. When scripture is said to be "sufficiently full and clear in all things necessary to salvation," this doth not mean to exclude the common exercise of the reason and prudence of men, in order to apply the general directions of scripture to particular cases which occur, even in things which are necessary to salvation. As for instance: Scripture bids us "do good and relieve the poor:" But it doth not tell us how many poor we must relieve, whether two, or twenty, or two hundred, nor whether for one day or many, &c. This must be determined by the particular circumstances of every christian, and by the exercise of his reason and prudence, upon the special occasions and objects which appear. Again, scripture requires of us "to deny ourselves and to mortify our appetites and passions:" But it leaves it to the reason and prudence of every christian, in what things, at what seasons, in what manner, and in what degree this must be done, and how far we must go in mortifying all passion and appetite, or in acting self-denial, since it is certain we are not called to root out every passion, to resist every appetite, nor to deny every natural inclination. Thus the honour of scripture is still secured, both as to it's "perfection and it's perspicuity in things necessary to salvation," though in many lesser particulars, and in the application of general rules to actual practice, we are forced to recur to the exercise of human reason and common prudence, both in things of greater and lesser importance in the christian life. The scripture supposes us to be rational creatures, when it teaches us to be christians.

usually to so many as can join in attention and suitable meditation, while one mouth speaks in a way of instruction, prayer or praise. Such probably were the churches of *Asia* and *Galatia*, and in several towns and cities of which the new testament gives an account*. But sometimes the word church is applied, to a very small or a very large number.

The word *ἐκκλησία* or church, sometimes signifies a few christians in a house; so the church in the house of *Priscilla* and *Aquila*, is saluted by *St. Paul* in his epistle to the *Romans*; and the same church salutes the *Corinthians* in the end of *St. Paul's* first epistle to them, though it is certain there were many more christians round about them in *Rome*. Very probably doctor *Whitby's* sense is just on these scriptures, viz. that this phrase is used concerning such whole families as were converts to the christian faith. And, besides, christians might meet together by agreement, in lesser societies for any spiritual occasions, and every such society might sometimes be called a church, or a christian assembly. Common prudence thought ten men enough to make a synagogue among the *Jews*. Our Saviour says, "Where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is, or will be in the midst of them." *Matth.* xviii. 20. But this does not prove plainly that there should be a church formed where there are but two or three christians: Prudence must direct in this matter, since scripture is silent.

But on the other hand, we may enquire how large may a church be? The multitude of christians in *Jerusalem*, *Acts* xv. 12. are called the church at *Jerusalem*, verse 22. and *Acts* xi. 22. Not that it is necessary to suppose all the three thousand who were converted, *Acts* ii. 41. and all the five thousand, *Acts* iv. 4. to be members of the church at *Jerusalem*; for this being done in the days of pentecost, multitudes of *jews* and profelytes were come from other nations to celebrate that festival, as *Acts* ii. 9. who being converted, returned to their own home. And it seems evident from the history, that when the apostles, elders, and brethren were met together at *Jerusalem*, to determine the question about circumcision, the whole church together with the apostles and elders wrote the letter and sent messengers with it to *Antioch*. *Acts* xv. 22, 23. So that it is possible one place might hold them, and they might make but one assembly.

But supposing they were too numerous to meet together in worship at once, especially in a time of persecution, they might divide themselves into smaller assemblies, for preaching and praying, and might break bread from house to house, if that phrase should signify the celebration of the Lord's supper. *Acts* ii. 42, 46.

Let it be further observed, that if the church at *Jerusalem* at that time was too large for one worshipping assembly, christian churches were but a forming at that time, and might not be absolutely formed and settled in the most perfect and convenient methods, for regular continuance and edification. Human affairs can proceed but by degrees, by reason of our weakness, even though they be conducted by divine inspiration.

Or perhaps, as all the christians in the world are sometimes called the church, so all who were in one city, may be called the church in that city, and the christians in one house may be called the church in that house, though they were not united by any other bond of agreement, but that of their common christianity. Yet I believe

* There was a sort of union even of all the jewish national church in one place three times a year, by the congress of all the males who were representatives of the nation at *Jerusalem*; and perhaps they might join in the solemnity of some sacrifices by the aid of loud instruments of musick in the temple, according to the figurative worship of the levilical dispensation, so that they made one huge congregation worshipping together, or at least successively in the several days of the festival.

lieve it will be found, that a christian church in it's most usual form was made up of so many, as could conveniently meet together for worship, and consented to do so; and the reason of things seems to make this most convenient for many purposes of edification and mutual help.

II. Scripture is silent how any of the lesser or circumstantial affairs of worship or order, should be finally determined in a church, when there are some of the members of different sentiments, and make an opposition. But the light of reason and common prudence teach us, that in such affairs which God has left to the determination of men, such as the appointing the place and the hour of worship, chusing a minister, or the like, the major part of the assembly must determine it by their vote, and the lesser part ought to acquiesce, where it is not contrary to the dictates of their conscience, their edification in faith and holiness, or their reasonable conveniency. But if the lesser part solemnly declare, they cannot comply therewith, they may peaceably depart to another society of christians, who may be more entirely of their mind, for there must be no imposition; yet the major part may surely act for themselves.

May I have leave to add this further also, that if the society shall agree to have nothing determined in a church, without a vote of two thirds of the members, I do not see it unlawful to make this agreement: And perhaps if this were generally practised it might tend to the greater unanimity and peace of churches, because in any debate the dissenters would be the fewer*.

III. The new testament is very silent about the combination of particular congregations, by some common band of union to make one national church. What does the light of nature teach us in this point?

I answer, there never was but one national church of God's own appointment; that was the church of the *jews*; and he himself saw fit to dissolve it; nor has he given men any revealed order or authority from himself to raise and establish another: Yet certainly the light of nature may sometimes direct and lead many christian congregations, even all that are in a county or in a nation, who agree in the necessary articles of christianity, to combine together and agree to assist each other many ways by counsel, encouragement, and support, in the maintainance of their sacred religion, always in a consistency with due allegiance preserved to their civil governors. The churches in a county or any particular district, may agree to send their ministers to consult together about their common welfare: They may chuse one person to transact matters of public and common concern for all the congregations in a county, and may bestow on him the name of an overseer, a superintendent, or a bishop; and so all the churches in a nation may desire their own ministers, or they may desire these their representatives or overseers, to join themselves in a common assembly or council for the public care of their liberty, or security of their peace, or advice in matters of consequence relating to their particular churches. And this assembly may chuse a president, and may call him their chief overseer or their archbishop; as I see nothing unlawful in all this, so neither do I see any ordinary necessity for it.

I

* The conclave of cardinals at *Rome*, who are supposed to have the wisdom of this world in perfection, never will chuse a pope till two thirds of them are agreed in the same person: And hereby they keep the whole hierarchy and system of that antichristian building and government in greater unanimity and peace. Why may not christians learn the wisdom of the serpent from the men of this world, so long as they do but maintain the innocence of the dove?

I add further, that many particular churches, by their ministers, deputies or messengers, met together, may contrive and agree in what manner to carry on the work of preaching, catechising, expounding, prayer, or psalmody; they may consult what subjects are chiefly necessary to be insisted on in preaching, at special seasons and occasions; what psalms or hymns to be sung, and how often psalmody to be repeated in a day; what days or hours may be set apart for prayer and humiliation, or thanksgiving on special occasions of danger, or deliverance, &c. And if these things be agreed with much unanimity, by many wise and pious men, met together, by the request of the churches, for this purpose; and these matters be determined, so as plainly tends to the common safety and edification of the whole number of churches in a country or nation, the particular churches which are there, and especially particular persons in any such church, according to the common rules of society, should usually consent and agree to such public, and almost unanimous agreements, of their deputies in these matters, unless they can shew some very plain and considerable reason against it. Reason itself, or the light of nature, dictates this, that a very few persons should not humourously set themselves against such a general agreement in things which are in themselves indifferent; and which are left undetermined by the new testament; and which must be determined some way or other by the agreement of christians.

But still I think it must be maintained, that though all the churches in a nation should be united and combined in this manner by their representatives, and call themselves one national church, they could acquire no divine right or authority hereby, to impose any new doctrines or practices in religion, any creed, or articles, or canons, or rules of worship, of their own making, on any particular church or person whatsoever, without their own consent. Neither the light of nature, nor the new testament, so far as I can find, has given them any such power.

IV. Scripture is also supposed to be silent how far the power and government of elders, or bishops, may extend, though it calls them sometimes rulers, and requires the church to obey. *Heb. xiii. 7.* "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God. And verse 17. Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls. —" May they not therefore invent new ceremonies of worship, and by their authority determine any of those matters in a christian society, which *Christ* has left undetermined in his word?

I answer, if scripture be silent herein, let all church-rulers take heed that they extend not this power beyond the actual commission or grant of scripture. It is always safer in points of dominion, to confine one's-self within the limits of the express grant or commission, than to go ever so little beyond it. When our natural ambition would tempt us to exceed these limits, our awe and dread of invading the province of *Christ*, should be an everlasting restraint.

Besides, when neither the light of reason nor scripture gives sufficient evidence of any authority to assume such a power, why should it be assumed? Reason tells us, that no man knows what rites or ceremonies will be pleasing to the great God, beyond the plain dictates of natural religion, unless God himself has revealed and required them.

The great and blessed God, when he would be worshipped with a variety of outward rites, established a church in *Judea*, with a hundred ceremonies, and new forms of worship and order; but he thought fit to abolish them again when the *Messiah*

Messiah brought in his more spiritual kingdom, that is, the christian church. Now therein there are but two such ceremonies, of most plain and evident divine appointment; baptism and the Lord's supper; or, if you will, add the observation of the Lord's day. And it is not to be supposed that God would abolish and destroy a hundred ceremonies of his own institution, and give the fancies of men leave to invent a new scheme of ceremonial worship at their own pleasure, and impose new-invented rites upon their fellow-christians; especially when we are required to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith *Christ* has now made us free, and not to be entangled with yokes of bondage." *Gal. v. 1.* What a strange medley of superstitious and ridiculous fooleries would be introduced into christian worship, if the elders or rulers in any ages of the church, might invent ceremonies at their pleasure, and impose them on the people? The church of *Rome*, by this means is become a theater of *jewish* and heathen pageantry, to the great dishonour of God, the reproach of christianity, and the hazard and ruin of the souls of men.

It will be replied here, but is not some power of rule and government still given to judges in a nation, and to magistrates in a city, notwithstanding the unhappy consequences which may arise from the abuse of this power. The abuse of authority does not prove there is no such authority: Even so in churches, the power may be abused; yet surely, there must be some persons who have power and authority, rule and government, lodged in their hands, even since the days of inspiration and extraordinary commission; for without it, every society will run into great disorder and confusion. Pray what is this rule or power of government, which is granted to ordinary ministers in a christian church; and wherein does it consist, if not in appointing such things as *Christ* has left indifferent? To this I answer;

The rule and government which is committed to ordinary ministers in the church, so far as I can understand it, seems to consist in these things following; viz. in going before the people, and leading the several parts of their worship, and becoming their example in every duty; in teaching them the principles and rules of their religion; the knowledge, profession, and practice of those doctrines and duties, that worship and order, which reason and natural religion dictates, and that which *Christ* himself has revealed, super-added, and established in his word: It consists in exhorting, persuading, and charging the hearers with solemnity in the name and authority of *Christ*, to comply therewith; in instructing the people how to apply those general principles and rules to particular cases and occurrences, and giving them their best advice; in presiding in their assemblies, and particularly as to the admission and exclusion of members: It consists in watching over the flock; in guarding them against errors and dangers; in admonishing, and warning, and reproving, with all gravity and authority, those who neglect or oppose any of the rules of *Christ*. But I cannot find where our blessed Lord has given them any power, or pretence of power, to impose on conscience any such advices of their own, which neither reason nor revelation impose; much less to impose any of their own inventions of new doctrines, or duties; or so much as their own peculiar explications of the words of *Christ*, by their own authority. When our Saviour gave commission to his disciples, or his apostles, to "preach the gospel to all nations, it was in this manner: Go, teach them to observe, not whatsoever you shall command, but, whatsoever I have commanded you." *Matt. xxviii. 20.*

It is granted indeed, the apostles had authority to explain the meaning of *Christ* to the churches by inspiration; but even they were not entrusted to invent any new doctrines or laws of their own, and impose them upon men.

And

And as these inspired persons have communicated to the churches all that *Christ* designed, we must rest there. And since *Christ* is the only Lord of his own church, whose wisdom is infallible, and whose power and authority are unquestionable, it is very unreasonable to suppose that he should leave any part of the doctrines or duties of christianity to be invented, or imposed upon his churches, by men, whose best wisdom and knowledge are weak, and fallible, and uncertain; and their authority so doubtful and questionable, or rather so null and void, as to any inventions and impositions of their own.

Alas, what wretched work would such a supposed authority make in different churches, in the same age? What contentions, and endless confusions, would be raised among christians? What different and contrary opinions, and ceremonies, and forms of worship and practice, would be imposed on distinct churches, and all called by the christian name? Has not the whole church of *Christ* suffered infinite damage by these pretences?

What mischiefs and strifes, and schisms, would arise in the same churches, by the different sentiments and injunctions of different elders or pastors in the same church? What eternal innovations in churches, as to their faith, worship, and practice, when pastors die successively, and others, of different principles, come in their room? Has not the world seen too much of this already, in every age of the church?

Observe with what zeal *St. Paul*, the greatest of the apostles, exclaims against any such sort of power, even in himself and his fellow-teachers. "What is *Paul*, or what is *Apollos*, or what is *Cephas*, or *Peter*, but servants, or ministers, by whom ye were taught to believe the same gospel, or the same religion and institutions of *Christ*." 1 *Cor.* i. 12. and iii. 5 "We are far from being lords of your faith: We are only the helpers of your joy." 2 *Cor.* i. 24.

As for the lesser things, which *Christ* has commanded, and which are necessary to be determined some way or other in a church, as in any other human society; such as the appointment of the place and hour of meeting, the chusing a president, the method and order of their religious exercises, &c. These must be agreed, or at least consented to, by the society itself. A judge in a court, or a magistrate in a city, has no power to make any new law: His business is only to explain and apply in general the laws that are made, according to the best of his understanding: And after all, it is a jury of twelve men, in our national courts of justice, that determines the affair with regard to particular things or persons. So ministers in the church are not lords or sovereigns in *Christ's* kingdom: They, in their highest character, can be supposed to be set up but as judges, to explain his laws, and apply them to rising occasions, and shew men how "to do all things decently and orderly;" 1 *Cor.* xii. 40. but in many cases of church-affairs, it is the people that must actually apply them to particular persons or occurrences. Ministers have not any dominion given them, either over our faith or practice.

It may be observed also, that the names which are given to ministers in scripture, do not signify sovereign rule and authority: Their name is ministers, or servants, and they are never called lords, or commanders, but leaders, presidents, stewards, shepherds, teachers, elders, overseers, &c. all which intimate a limited authority, and not supreme power*.

VOL. VI.

E

But

* Governments is the strongest word of authority used to denote any office in the christian church, and that is but one. 1 *Cor.* xii. 28. And some learned men are of opinion, this name signifies deacons, whose government reached not to the faith or conscience, but they distributed and disposed of the money wisely, which

But as many writers among the *Puritans* and *Nonconformists* have handled this matter abundantly in the last age, so the reverend and learned bishop *Hoadley*, in latter years, has happily laboured to guard this prerogative of *Christ* to make laws in his own church, from the usurpations of men; and therefore I insist no further on this particular.

Though the scripture be silent about the extent of the power of particular bishops or elders in a church, yet some may say, does not the light of nature teach us, that many grave and wise persons, the bishops and elders of many churches, meeting together in a synod, or solemn council, may join and make laws, or constitutions, for all the churches under their care? And are not the churches bound to obey? First, I answer,

Answer I. It is granted, that the light of nature would lead the wisest persons sometimes to meet together for mutual advice and counsel; but I know not of any natural or scriptural right, that ministers, joined in a synod, have to make new laws for christian churches; nor have single christians or congregations any right or leave, much less any obligation, to subject themselves and their consciences to such a dominion of men, in things which neither scripture nor nature requires. It is the ready way, by degrees, to put other kings into the kingdom of *Christ*, who alone is sovereign in his church. It is a dangerous thing for christians to give up themselves to the will of fallible men by such a subjection; and they will find, by woeful experience, many things, by degrees, imposed upon them, that will neither suit with their conscience or their conveniency, with their own inclination, or their faithful subjection to *Christ*. What has been the event of this in all ages may justly be again expected, if the same experiment be made. I answer, secondly,

Answer II. If this were once allowed, may not these ministers, thus met together in one nation, upon the same principle, depute some of their number to join with such sort of deputation of christian ministers in other nations, till at last they devolve all their power upon one small assembly or general council, or upon one single person, who may be deputed or appointed to determine for them all? If these sort of deputations carry any authentic power with them, to make laws for conscience, they may be carried on as far as an universal council, or a *Pope*, before they stop, and we are at *Rome*, ere we are aware.

You will reply, perhaps, Is there not some encouragement given to the government of the church by assemblies, councils, convocations, or synods of bishops or elders, in that famous chapter, *Acts* xv. where they met about that great question, "Whether the heathen converts should be circumcised or no?"

But the answer to this is very easy: This was not a council of elders or bishops, for here are the brethren of the church at *Jerusalem* joined together with the apostles and elders; and besides, that assembly had so much of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God in them, that they could justly pronounce, "It seemed good to the holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden,"—verses 22, 23, 25, 28. Now when persons divinely inspired, as those apostles and elders, and many of the brethren were, shall meet together for such a purpose, I have nothing to say against their determinations. But let ministers in their councils, in later ages, take heed how they assume lordship over conscience, till they are furnished with such gifts, and can make such

which the helps just before mentioned, that is, men of wealth and goodness, gave toward the support of the poor. See Mr. *Chandler's* commentary on *Joel*, page 150. Or if these governments imply high authority and power, let it be remembered, it is only mentioned as an office in the days of inspiration, and is joined with apostles, prophets, evangelists, gifts of tongues, &c.

such a divine commission appear, as will warrant them to say, "It appeared good to the holy Ghost and to us, to appoint so and so."

Perhaps it will be replied here, the apostles and inspired persons knew what was the christians duty before, and could have determined this question by their extraordinary gifts, without convening in a council or synod; but probably the providence of God so ordered it, that even inspired apostles should meet and debate this point in a synod, on purpose to teach all succeeding churches what is to be done in such a case, and to shew how their difficulties and controversies should be authoritatively determined by synods, even to the end of the world.

Answer I. And I have as much right to say, perhaps the apostles *Peter* and *James*, &c. did not know this matter so well before, and therefore could not have determined this question without convening in a council; for their divine revelations of many particular things were made to them not all at once, in the days of *Pentecost*, when the holy Spirit came upon them; but this was done by degrees, and at particular seasons, as the occasions of christianity and the churches required it. *Peter* did not know that he must preach the gospel to the heathens several years after that day of *Pentecost*, when the holy Spirit fell upon them in cloven tongues, till a vision from heaven taught it him, when *Cornelius* was directed by an angel to send messengers to call him to *Cæsarea*. And it is probable, God ordained this council to be called, not only to teach the church at *Jerusalem*, as well as the apostles, a full answer to the question in dispute, but to render the unanimous direction and appointment of so many inspired persons more public, more weighty, and efficacious, than the voice of a single apostle would have been in so important a case of controversy between the *jewish* and gentile converts.

Answer II. I will allow that providence, perhaps, might appoint this council of wise and knowing men at *Jerusalem* to be convened, to teach the following churches and ages what they should in cases of doubt and difficulty; that is, that they should meet together, and advise with one another, and debate matters freely and sincerely, according to that great rule of human prudence which *Solomon* also teaches us; "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." *Prov. xi. 14*. And great deference should be paid to the advice of many aged, learned, and pious men, met in council. But if no inspired men are among them, they can only draw up their conclusion thus; "It seemed good to us, fallible men, to give our opinion or advice so or so;" but not to determine absolutely for other persons, and make rules to bind the consciences of others, unless they could add, "It seemed good to the holy Spirit also, as well as unto us;" for if the vote of a council of fallible men could bind us, why should not the council of *Trent*, or any other councils, bind us to all their antichristian decrees? The best constituted church or council may in time grow degenerate, and if they have such authority given them, they may make heathenish or hellish decrees, and bind them on the consciences of men.

Answer III. And yet further, in the third place, I add, if this decree at *Jerusalem* had not been the direction and determination of the holy Spirit, by the lips of inspired men, why should the churches at *Antioch*, *Syria*, and *Cilicia Acts xv. 23*. submit to a vote or opinion of the church at *Jerusalem*, any more than the church at *Jerusalem* should submit to an opinion of the church at *Corinth*, or *Rome*, or *Antioch*? What was done at *Jerusalem* by inspired men once, on an extraordinary occasion, cannot be made a binding example or rule, for the determination of conscience in all following times, and in ordinary church-affairs, where no inspired persons are present;

for by this precedent, one church would have power given it to determine for another; which I know no church pretends to, but that of *Rome*.

And finally, It is plain, if this scripture give authority to uninspired men in ordinary cases, it gives this dominion to the whole church at *Jerusalem*, and not to the bishops or elders only; for this was not a council made up of the elders, bishops or representatives of the churches of *Jerusalem*, *Antioch*, *Syria*, and *Cilicia*, but of the apostles, elders, and brethren of the church at *Jerusalem*; and yet they authoritatively determined the case for the churches of the gentiles, which they should never have done, if there had been no apostles or inspired persons there.

Whatever therefore the church at *Jerusalem* determined as a duty for the gentile churches to practise in a dubious case, because it had apostles, and many inspired persons in it, can be no sufficient authority for synods, convocations, or councils of bishops or elders of modern churches, to determine other dubious cases, for their own or other congregations, and bind their consciences to any point of faith or practice merely by their authority, when they have no inspired persons among them. But I only glance at these things, and will not enter into a debate about them at present.

VI. Though baptism and the Lord's supper are ceremonies of divine institution, yet is not the new testament in a great measure silent as to the persons who shall celebrate them?

I answer, the scripture acquaints us, that the commission to baptize was plainly given here to those who were appointed to teach the nations. *Matth. xxviii. 20*. And the light of nature shews us, that those persons who are furnished with talents, and chosen, and called, and solemnly appointed to preach the gospel to men, to offer up their prayers and praises to God, and to lead the worship in churches, are certainly, in the nature of things, the most proper persons to administer or celebrate such rites or ordinances, as should be attended with the word and prayer; for "by the word and prayer is every thing sanctified" to its proper purposes in the kingdom of *Christ*. *1 Tim. iv. 5*.

And yet, if no ministers, elders, or bishops, are near at hand, nor the ministrations of any such are to be obtained, without sinful compliances, perhaps it may be better that some private member of that congregation, if sufficiently furnished with proper gifts, should be deputed or desired by the church, to perform these solemnities once or twice, than that these institutions of *Christ*, which are so plain and express, should be omitted for a long time together, merely on account of doubtful disputables. *Christ* has most expressly commanded this duty; but who shall administer this ordinance, and how ministers should be ordained, is much more obscure. If a congregation want a regular minister, yet the church should assemble for prayer; and exhortation or teaching, by reading or preaching should not be utterly neglected: Why then should they neglect the Lord's supper? If a neighbouring minister cannot conveniently be obtained, may not a brother of the congregation, who has competent abilities, be desired to pray, or to read a sermon, or to exhort, rather than the church be without any public worship, or spend their Lord's-day at home, and that for weeks or months together, for a considerable time? And may not a person thus qualified, if no minister be within reach, be deputed, or called by the church, to break bread to them, rather than live without obeying the express commands of a dying Saviour.

Now I have ventured so far in giving my opinion here, I may the more confidently add, that this should not be practised on every little common occasion, lest great inconveniencies arise thereby: And for this reason, every destitute church should furnish themselves, as soon as may be, with a pastor or minister of their own, to go
before

before them, and, in a regular manner, celebrate these divine rites of christianity, which ought not to be long neglected.

Some other cases might be mentioned, which may fall out in a christian church, wherein we can find no plain direction or example in scripture; and then reason and prudence must direct us: Where revelation is silent, reason is our guide.

S E C T I O N VI.

Christian churches formed like civil societies, upon the plain nature and reason of things.

PERMIT me here to give a little specimen, by way of similitude, how naturally a christian church is formed, when we suppose there are several christians within the reach and knowledge of one another, in this sinful world. It is raised in the same manner as any other civil society may be formed among men, especially among several natives of one country meeting together in a foreign land: And while I am representing their procedure, you may carry your thoughts of the formation and constitution of a christian church along with you in the simile, and apply it all the way.

Suppose three or four *englishmen*, who have their residence in a city of *China*, happen to meet one another, and by conversation, finding that they speak the same language, they make it known to each other, that they are natives of the same country; they all profess allegiance to the same king, *GEORGE* the second; and, though they sojourn for a season in a foreign land, and are engaged in many secular affairs there, yet they declare their resolution to behave as becomes *englishmen*, while they are waiting for a call from their sovereign to return home. They hereupon agree to meet once a week, in order to converse about the affairs of their own nation, to learn some tidings from it, to pay some special honours to their absent king, to learn further notices of his will, and to prepare for their return homeward.

The day which they appoint for their assembly, is the day of the accession of their king to the throne, in it's weekly return: The place is also agreed among them, such as may be convenient for their frequent attendance.

Other *englishmen*, who are in that city, hearing of this society, come to their assembly, one after another, and desire acquaintance with their countrymen and brethren: They make it appear, that they are natives of the same land, that they own the same sovereign, that they are doing his will, and preparing to return home at his orders: And, in the mean time, they desire the privilege of being admitted into their society. Upon such a profession, and by the approbation of the society, they are received into this *english* fellowship with pleasure.

Now it is not to be supposed, that every one of them is capable of taking proper care of the best interests of this society, nor of speaking in an instructive and profitable manner concerning the things that relate to their native country, their laws, and rules of conduct; their king, and their common design of a return. They agree therefore to chuse one person amongst them, who shall devote himself to this work, shall study the laws of their country, the rules of the proper behaviour of *englishmen*, and the mind and will of their king: One who shall present their common allegiance to their sovereign, in frequent addresses sent to *England*, and shall spend a hour or two every week, in setting before them what honours they owe to the king of *England*, what are the blessings of their native home, what are their duties

ties in a foreign land, what dangers they are exposed to among the heathen *chinese*, and how they may best avoid them; what are the enjoyments they expect at their return, and the best methods of preparation for it. This man accepts the office, and by a solemn vow of allegiance to the king, and faithfulness to his countrymen in this trust, he enters upon his office.

Besides this, once in a month, suppose they meet together, according to an appointment of their prince, to eat a morsel of bread, and drink a glass of wine together, in memory of some great benefit which the whole nation of *England* received by a difficult and bloody enterprize of the king's son, when in former years, he took a voyage from *England* to *China*; and they keep up this feast in honour to his name, wherein the provisions, after a short speech, are distributed to every member of the society, by the person whom they have appointed to instruct them in *english* affairs.

Now because this man spends a great part of his time in letters or dispatches to *England*, and in the study of *english* affairs, that he may the better entertain the assembly of his brethren at their solemn weekly meetings, the community agree to release him from the secular businesses of life, and join their liberality to maintain him with honour.

But here let it be observed, that though they pay so much respect to the person whom they chuse to be their instructor, and to go before them in the honours due to their king, yet they do not entrust him to invent any new ceremony to testify their allegiance, nor to impose on them any new law or custom, but what he can find prescribed among the laws of their nation, and appointments of the king, or of his ambassadors to *China*. In these matters indeed, he may require obedience in the name of their king; but in all other things he must act according to the agreement or opinion of the society; which must be testified by the vote of the major part.

Among this community, some happen to be aged, or sick, or disabled for work; or they are fallen into poverty, and their circumstances are sunk in the world, notwithstanding their diligence and labour: These are not capable of maintaining themselves; the society therefore cheerfully contribute toward their support: And they entrust two or three persons with this money, and desire them to take care that the table of the poor be supplied. They entrust also with these persons what money they collect for the honourable maintenance of their teacher; and desire them to take care, that every thing necessary toward their weekly meetings at a certain time, and at a convenient place, be provided at their public charge. They go on in this manner with much comfort and mutual assistance, in every thing that relates to their welfare in a foreign land; and rejoice in their hope to meet one day in *England*.

And as they are ever adding to their society by admitting new members, upon their credible profession and appearance to be true *britons*, in the room of such as are yearly called home; so if any among them prove to be false and insincere, and are guilty of crimes highly disgraceful to their profession of being natives of *England*, and their allegiance to their king, they have no other punishment for them besides that they are cut off from the society, and forbid to enjoy the privileges thereof any longer.

Now it is so very easy to apply these transactions of *englishmen* in *China* to the affairs of a christian church, that I hardly need display the parallel. Christians profess to be natives of heaven, to be born from above: They sojourn for a season in the world as in a foreign land, till their father and king summon them home. They speak the language of the gospel, or of the kingdom of heaven, and understand it; and they know each other hereby: They agree to meet together to worship their king, and pay allegiance to him; to learn more of his will, and seek his favour. The day

day of their solemn assemblies is the day of the resurrection of *Christ*, the Son of God, and their Lord. When they do special honours to him, they eat bread and drink wine, to solemnize the memory of their deliverance from sin and hell, when he was sent into the world to die for them. Then, by calling away their hearts from this world, and conversing about heavenly things, they are continually preparing for their return home. They chuse one or more teachers, pastors, or bishops, to instruct them in their duty, and to offer up their common addresses to God, in the name of *Christ*; to put them in mind of the things of heaven, and to walk before them in exemplary holiness. They chuse deacons to relieve the poor, out of their public liberality, as well as to take care that their pastors or teachers be maintained. They receive in new members who are worthy, upon their profession; and they cast out those that are dishonourable. They walk onward in this way toward the heavenly state; and wait the summons from on high, to call them thither by death and the resurrection.

S E C T I O N VII.

The several advantages of such a church, or christian society.

SO natural a scheme of social religion as this, does not need long and express forms of institution, after the great doctrines and duties of the christian faith and life are plainly revealed and received. All that is found in the new testament relating to christian churches, so happily corresponds with these dictates of the light of nature, and the affairs of the civil life, that it has made these rules much more plain, and easy, and practicable, than those of the *jewish* religion, or perhaps of any other religion, that pretends to divine revelation. This scheme is built on the eternal reasons and relations of things, as well as the word of God. The particular positive prescriptions relating to christian churches are but few, while the general duties of christian fellowship are such as the light of nature and reason seem to dictate to all societies whatsoever. It is the evil mixture of the needless and fanciful inventions of men, together with the plain and common dictates of nature and scripture, and the impositions of these inventions on conscience, which hath done so much injury to christianity, defaced it's beauty, and tarnished it's honours.

II. This scheme is perfectly consistent with every form and kind of civil government, whether it be a kingdom, a senate, or a republic. As it does not mingle itself with the interests of this world, nor assume to itself any civil or coercive power, so it can make no head against the governors of the country; for it's power is of another kind, and reaches but to one single society of christians: Nor are they combined by any law of *Christ*, in such united multitudes, under one common visible head, as to make themselves dangerous to any state. Whatsoever hath been done in the world by men professing christianity, in a way of resistance to lawtul governors, or rebellions against them, hath never been done by them as churches of *Christ*, formed upon the model I have laid down.

III. This form of a christian church allows to all it's members the most perfect liberty of men and christians. It is inconsistent with persecution for conscience sake; for it leaves all civil rewards and preferments, penalties and punishments, to kingdoms,

doms, and states, and the governors of this world. It pretends to no power over conscience, to compel men to obedience; no prisons, no axes, fire, nor sword. It gives it's ministers power and authority to command nothing but what is found in the bible: All other things must be determined by the consent of the people, who are supposed to be led by common prudence, by the necessary reason of things, and by a vote of the major part of the society. But if in any of these things, particular persons, after all proper enquiries, cannot agree with the major part, they may make their remonstrances, and be dismissed, if they cannot continue there with tolerable satisfaction; or they may withdraw to another congregation, if they are aggrieved, and the society refuse to dismiss them.

I confess, those christians who differ from the major part of the congregation should seriously examine themselves, whether their disagreement doth not arise from any pique, or prejudice, or worldly interest, or humour, or obstinate self-will; and, in some particulars, they should deny themselves, rather than divide themselves, from a society whose communion they have long enjoyed: More especially, they should take heed of this in the country, where they have not conveniency of holding communion with other christian societies. And even where they have such opportunities and conveniencies, persons should not indulge a fickle humour, nor run wandering about from place to place, and fluttering from one church to another, upon every little difference. But after all, it must be acknowledged, there may be several just and reasonable grounds for particular christians to separate from a society, from which they differ in some sentiments or transactions, though they still continue to acknowledge them to be a true church of *Christ*. Such a liberty as this must be still maintained; for christian churches must have all voluntary members, and not be turned into prisons.

If any person sins so grossly against the plain rules of the gospel, or the laws of God or *Christ*, as to appear to renounce the characters of a christian, the church hath power only to renounce such a person, and disclaim all christian fellowship with him, and turn him into the world, which is the kingdom of *Satan*, till he repent: But they have no authority to hurt his life or limbs; to touch a hair of his head, nor a penny of his money, by way of punishment.

IV. By such sort of churches as these, christianity is more easily maintained in single and secret assemblies, if the powers of this world favour them not; for there is no need of large multitudes assembling together for any ordinances of worship, or for discipline; no need of any such public appearances or transactions, as may give any unnecessary umbrage or suspicion to persecuting enemies: There is no need of councils and synods of ministers of distant cities, to meet together to make laws for the church, or to rectify disorders there: Nor is there any need to travel over large counties or diocesses, to fetch a rightful ordination of a minister for any church; much less to take a journey to *Rome*, if all the ministers in a nation were dead, or departed from the faith. If the whole society, which was wont to meet together, cannot do it under a persecuting prince, for fear of exposing themselves to public injury, they may assemble in smaller parties, and their preachers may teach, and pray, and administer all ordinances among them, as it was often done in the primitive times, maintaining their christian fellowship by secret meetings: And they may all be called little churches, in the house. By such single congregations, larger or smaller, was the whole church of *Christ* in the world continued and increased, the first two or three

three hundred years, whensoever the powers of this world took it into their heads to persecute and destroy the professors of the christian faith.

Perhaps it may be objected here, would it not be a much more substantial and powerful way of maintaining christian churches, if these single congregations, by virtue of their ministers or elders, were combined together in some sacred bond of union, that might make a considerable body of people under such heads or leaders, or under one supreme head, who might better defend them against the invasion of their rites by any secular powers or persecuting princes ?

To this I answer, that churches of *Christ* considered as such, have no secular power in themselves, nor authority to make any efforts against secular powers : But when men become christians, or members of churches, they do not divest themselves of any secular or civil rights or powers which they had before : And therefore when natural or civil liberties are unjustly and cruelly invaded by any of the men of this world, they by the laws of nature have a just right, as men, to defend themselves ; and no ecclesiastical combinations can give them any further right or power than what they have as men : And this belongs to them still, whatsoever religion they profess, whether natural or revealed, whether pagan, *mahometan*, or christian. A professor of every religion has a right to be protected by the government as long as he maintains his allegiance to the governors, and does no injury to the state. But if governors will not protect him, but will give him up to the fury of persecutors, he has certainly a civil right to defend himself and his friends against all assaults and injuries.

V. Miscarriages in the government, or conduct of such a church as I have described, are less dangerous to christianity ; because they affect but one single congregation, they reach but to one society. Those ecclesiastical governments which include vast numbers and multitudes combined under one or more spiritual heads or rulers, if there be any misrule and confusion brought in among them, it involves multitudes in the mischief of it, and sometimes shakes or destroys whole nations. But if a government which is included within one single congregation be never so much divided by contentions, and fall into the greatest confusions, the mischief is not of so large an extent, nor can it have so fatal and dreadful consequences. If the congregation itself should be actually dissolved by these constitutions, the particular members of it may depart and join themselves to other congregations within their reach or neighbourhood, who are nearest of their own opinion, and walk with them in a religious and peaceful fellowship, which they could not well do before, because of such different opinions and divided spirits.

VI. Such single societies or churches so constituted are most happily suited to maintain and carry on the great purposes and designs of the gospel, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of true christians. Of this matter see the learned doctor *Owen's* enquiry into the original of churches, chapter vi. page 119. See also sermons at *Berry-street*, sermon xlix.

Upon the whole, whensoever it shall appear that any other form of a christian church is more happily suited to the edification and peace of christians, to the preservation of christian liberty, and to secure the spiritual honours which belong to *Christ* in his churches, and at the same time appears to have more countenance from the new testament than this, I shall be glad to relinquish this set of sentiments, and with pleasure exchange it for a better. That is certainly the best form of a christian

church, whereby truth, peace and holiness may be most happily promoted and secured.

S E C T I O N VIII.

Of the power of churches to appoint holy things or actions.

Question **W**HETHER a christian church may not appoint or determine circumstances and ceremonies of worship and order, which are left undetermined in the new testament, and require them to be observed?

Answer. In the primitive churches there were extraordinary gifts and powers communicated to them: There were apostles, evangelists and inspired leaders and guides; but since these extraordinary gifts and powers are ceased, reason and scripture are our only rules. It is upon this foot every christian church, or every single society of christians, "receiving one another in the Lord" as *St. Paul* speaks, *Rom xvi. 2.* that is, agreeing to worship and walk together according to the faith and order of the gospel, when it is furnished with it's proper officers, that is, a bishop, or bishops and deacons, is the highest ecclesiastical power that I know of in this world, which has plain evidence and support in the word of God, or the necessary reason of things. Yet I cannot find that either the light of reason or scripture has given such a church, or it's officers, any authority to invent and use, to appoint and command new ceremonies of divine worship in any case: Nor has it a right to impose on the consciences of men any such self-invented modes or circumstances of worship, so as to make them holy things, or to oblige any single christian to comply therewith.

But to speak a little more particularly to this matter. We must distinguish between the religious ceremonies of worship, and the mere natural circumstances of the performance of it.

Natural circumstances are such as are necessary, or at least highly expedient, for the performance of acts of worship, considered merely as natural actions, and abstracted from their religious design. Such are time, place, habit, gesture, &c. for no natural action can be put forth but it must be in some time, or in some place, in some posture of body; nor can any transaction in public society be conveniently performed without some sort of garments, without a commodious place and seasonable hours for assembling: These in their own nature are properly no parts of worship or religion, but circumstances belonging to those actions considered merely as natural, and as the actions of natural and sociable creatures.

Among these natural circumstances of actions in social worship, some are necessary to be determined one certain way, and others are not so.

The circumstances necessary to be determined one certain way, are the time and place, the language, and something of the manner or order of the religious actions, &c.

Now where these are not determined by God himself, it is granted they must be determined by every worshipping society for themselves; for they must agree what hour to meet together, what place to meet in, what language * shall be used in the worship, whether they shall begin or end the worship with the Lord's supper,
or

* Always excepting those primitive times, when various languages were used as an extraordinary confirmation of the gospel of *Christ*. But in ordinary seasons of worship the assembly must know and agree before hand, that it must be performed in a language which they understand.

or with a psalm or song, who shall minister in holy things : Whether there shall be any responses of the congregation to the words of him that officiates in prayer, or whether amen shall be pronounced aloud, or whether a silent assent be sufficient. Where God hath not determined these things, I do not find that he hath ever given authority to any person to determine these for other persons, or any society of men to determine them for other societies ; but they must be determined by an agreement or vote of every society for itself. As in several of these things there must be a concurrence or agreement to make any solemn and constant meetings and transactions of a civil society, peaceful and useful, regular and orderly, so are the same things needful to be agreed upon in a christian church to render the worship of every single society practicable and edifying, harmonious, agreeable, and decent.

And since these things are necessary to be determined one way, if some few persons in the society will not consent to the agreement of the major part of them, they must depart and join themselves to some other society which is more for their conveniency. Such are the various tempers, engagements, sentiments, inclinations and conveniencies of different persons, that there would be a great bar put upon the frequent meetings of any large society for any civil or religious purposes, if they must not meet and transact any affairs till every single person be perfectly pleased. If therefore the minor part cannot, or will not consent to what the bulk of the society agree upon, here is no imposition upon their consciences, while they are allowed to join themselves with other societies, civil or religious, where these necessary and disputed circumstances are agreed and practised more according to their mind.

The circumstances which are not necessary to be determined one way, are the postures or gestures of the body, the garments of the preacher, or of him that prays, of singers or hearers, &c. and these every person may determine for himself : Some may have a blue garment, while others have red or brown, black or white ; some may wear a long coat, others a short one ; some may stand in prayer, others kneel if they will ; some may chuse to stand in singing or preaching, while others may chuse to sit in the same society.

I must confess there seems to be something of a natural decency in the uniformity of some of these circumstances, especially that of gesture, in one and the same congregation, in some particular parts of worship, as standing in prayer, &c. but no such necessity of such a uniformity as to give power to any person or society to determine for every single worshipper, and oblige him to obey.

If any whole church, or a multitude of churches in a nation will chuse to agree in any particular practice, it is well ; or if they can persuade every person to consent to the same : But if some persons will presume to determine all these circumstances one way, and will impose them upon their fellow-christians by a pretended authority, they go beyond the bounds that either the light of nature or scripture allows, and assume such a power over the consciences of men as I cannot find the chapter and verse where it was given them ; for these circumstances being left indifferent in themselves, in the nature of things, and in scripture, they are not necessary to be determined one way for a whole society, and much less should all this society be obliged in conscience to comply with such an imposition.

Having given such an account of the natural circumstances of social worship, let us enquire what are religious ceremonies.

Religious ceremonies are either real actions, or modes and circumstances of action by which some special honour is designed to be paid to God, and therefore God alone can institute them, who alone can determine what shall be honourable to himself.

These have generally a signification of something inward and invisible annexed to them: But whether we can learn what they signify or no, still there is a holiness and a necessity placed in them by the divine appointment; and therefore man cannot appoint them, nor add to them, because he cannot put holiness into any thing, nor make any thing holy or sinful, which God has not made so.

Some of these religious ceremonies are real actions, and entirely divine institutions or sacred appointments of service, which are in no wise necessary to natural actions, nor should ever have been practised, if God had not positively enjoined them: Others in their abstracted nature antecedent to the divine command, were but mere natural circumstances of action; yet when thus determined particularly by God, they become as it were parts of our religion, and our worship.

Circumcision, offering of sacrifices, slaying and eating the passover, burning of incense, lighting the lamps, sprinkling of blood, divers washings, the use of the instruments of musick in the temple, &c. seem to be of the first sort, viz. such real religious actions and ceremonies of pure divine institution, as were by divine appointment imposed upon the ancient church.

Others are of the second sort, among which may be reckoned the places or spots of ground, perhaps where the tabernacle and temple stood, the holy times, such as sabbaths, new moons, and other festivals, the attire or vesture of the priests who officiate, &c. These were but modes and circumstances of action made necessary to the *jewish* worshippers, ordained to be holy, and converted into religious ceremonies.

Under the new testament the ceremonies distinct from natural religion, whether real actions or mere modes and circumstances of action, are few and easy, such as the washing with water in baptism, and eating bread and wine at the supper of the Lord, to which we may add the observation of the first day of the week in memory of our risen Saviour.

Any of the circumstances or modes of action which belong to these religious rites, which are not determined by scripture, and are not necessary to be determined one way in order to social worship, must be left indifferent to every worshipper, according as his conscience or his conveniency shall direct. I know not any text where God has given any man, or set of men, any power to impose on others. See these things happily set forth at large in doctor *Calamy's* excellent discourse, called an "Introduction to the second part of moderate non-conformity;" of which I am informed, that Mr. *Locke* himself should say upon the perusal of it, that while the protestant dissenters kept close to these principles, they would sufficiently maintain their ground, and justify their separation from any established national church, if that church should assume an authority to impose things which ought to be left indifferent.

Surely the fourteenth chapter to the *Romans* lays a foundation for this christian liberty, and forbids to impose on conscience the observation of meats or days, and in general all impositions of this kind. The apostle, while he handles this subject, had no order to impose or forbid these practices on the *Romans*, to whom he wrote. He leaves every man to use his own "liberty in the gospel, nor be entangled with any fresh yokes of bondage;" *Gal. v. 1.* supposing always that the light of nature and common reason will keep all sober christians within the bounds of human decency, common prudence and civility; and that a preference be given to such modes, and gestures, and seasons, which seem to be patronized by the examples mentioned in scripture.

The custom also of the holiest and purest churches may have some influence to direct our practice, in such affairs of small importance where we cannot find any other rule of determination, either from the light of nature or scripture. The apostle *Paul* seems to give this advice to the *Corinthians* in the business of wearing the hair long

long or short, 1 Cor. xi. 14, 15. For after he had offered some reason on one side from the mere light of nature and decency, he adds, verse 16. "that if any man seem to be contentious, that is, be not satisfied with my arguments and persist in contending about this matter, we have no such customs, nor the churches of God:" That is, let him be determined by the custom of us the apostles, and of other christian churches; let him not affect a singularity in things of less moment, nor give offence to the generality of the most serious and pious professors of the same faith in such little things as these are.

But if any man, or any society of men, shall assume so much to themselves, as to pretend a divine authority to confine other churches and christians to a most exquisite uniformity in every punctilio that relates to religion and circumstances of worship, even in things which God has not appointed, they throw us back again into a sort of *Judaism*, and make and impose new yokes of bondage; they pretend to bind what *Christ* has made free, and seem to usurp his prerogative: A pretence to such power appears to me to be the very spring and spirit of antichristianism; there is the foundation for papacy laid, though it has not arisen yet to an universal supremacy, to an infallible chair, and a triple crown. See pages 23—26.

All christians are bound by the new testament to worship one God, even God the Father who dwells in heaven, in the name of one mediator *Jesus Christ*, by the aids or operations of one Spirit, they are bound to be baptized into these names, and to remember the death of *Christ* in the holy supper, to trust in the promises of the gospel, and to practise the precepts of it in an uniform life of holiness. This is evident and certain, and perhaps this may be thought almost sufficient to maintain the unity of the christian church. But still let it be observed, that where christians are fallen into very different opinions in any important matters of doctrine or duty, or where their sentiments are so extremely divided, and perhaps contrary to each other in matters of worship and order, that they cannot agree and join in the same forms and modes of divine service, or where they have not charity enough to bear with each other's differences in things of less moment, they ought not to force themselves, nor to be forced into one society or church; but they should join themselves to such distinct societies as are nearest to their own mind; for their edification in faith, holiness and love, is one great and chief end of church fellowship.

Though the men of *Israel* were bound by law to join three times a year to worship God who dwelt in the temple or tabernacle by the appointed sacrifices of the passover, *Pentecost*, &c. yet they were not bound by any law of God to attend that synagogue which was nearest to their own dwelling, where prayer and praise was performed, and instructions and exhortations given to the people. Herein they had, or they should have had, liberty to chuse their fellow-worshippers and the synagogue where they would worship, if they had any scruple upon their consciences about the practices of that which was nearest to them. And the same liberty belongs to christians in every age and nation.

To force all christians into the same church, whose understandings and opinions point different ways, and to bind them together in an outward form of fellowship with their minds so much divided, is the way to increase their differences, to kindle their fire with more fierceness, and awaken their wrath to a higher degree, till they grow mad against each other and ruin the church. It is like tying *Sampson's* foxes together by the tail with firebrands between them, while their heads stand contrary ways, and then inclosing them all with a strong fence in one field: There they will unavoidably snarl and rage against one another; they will draw different ways, and diffuse their fire and wrath till they have burnt up the field, and destroyed a lovely harvest.

T H E
T E R M S
O F
CHRISTIAN COMMUNION,

Humbly proposed to the

C H U R C H E S of C H R I S T,

W I T H

An Attempt towards the SOLUTION of various Questions
and Cases of Conscience, arising from this Subject.

Q U E S T I O N I.

*What is christian communion? And what are the general and agreed terms
of it?*

CHRISTIAN communion in the sense of scripture, is that communion or fellowship which christians have with God the Father, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*, or with one another; and both are joined together by the apostle *John*, 1 *John* i. 3. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship, or communion, with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son *Jesus Christ*."

This communion or fellowship in the spiritual and invisible part of it consists in a participation of the favour of God, the spiritual benefits of *Christ*, and the invisible
and

Quest. I. What is christian communion, and the general terms of it ? (4)
and everlasting blessings of the gospel. But this is not our present subject of discourse.

The visible fellowship or communion that christians have with each other, consists chiefly in the "participation of the spiritual ordinances of the gospel, and mutual assistances for the good of each other.

The special ordinances of the gospel are chiefly these two, baptism and the Lord's supper."

Baptism is an ordinance appointed by *Christ*, for our entrance into the visible church; and when once performed is never to be repeated.

The Lord's supper is an ordinance appointed by *Christ* after we are entered into the church, for the assistance and increase of our faith and hope, our comfort and holiness; and ought to be as often repeated as christians have proper opportunity: It represents our communion with the Lord *Jesus Christ* in his death, and the benefits which are derived from it, such as the pardon of sin through his sacrifice of atonement, &c. and it represents also our communion with one another in those benefits, or our joint participation thereof, according to the apostle's description of it, *1 Cor. x. 16, 17.* "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of *Christ*? We are all partakers of that one bread."

The other parts, privileges, or offices of christian communion, shall be mentioned, when there is need of it, in distinguishing constant and occasional communion.

Now among all the ordinances of worship it is in our partaking of these two, viz. baptism and the Lord's supper, that special christian communion chiefly consists. But when we use the words christian communion, we have most frequently a regard to the Lord's supper, because our communion with one another, and joint participation of the blessings of the gospel, is most plainly represented thereby; and by the frequent repetition of it, our christian communion or holy fellowship is maintained in a more explicit and honourable manner.

Having considered briefly the nature of christian communion, we must enquire now into the general terms of it.

As in order to hold an inward and spiritual communion with *Christ* and his people, we must be sincere believers, or real christians; so every person seeking visible communion with the church of *Christ* should satisfy his own conscience with nothing short of real christianity: But christians and churches not being able to search the heart as *Christ* and conscience can, the term of our visible communion with christians is "a credible profession of real christianity, or a professed subjection to the gospel of *Christ*, as the apostle expresses it," *2 Cor. ix. 13.* that is, such an outward profession of inward and hearty christianity, as gives just and credible evidence that this profession is sincere, and that the person thus professing is a hearty christian: *Rom. x. 9, 10.* "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord *Jesus*, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." If a man profess christianity in any manner or form of profession soever, and yet make it plainly and openly appear by other parts of his conduct, that his profession is not sincere and hearty, he has no right to salvation according to this text, and has always been deemed unworthy of christian communion in all the scripture history, and in the best and purest ages of the church. Those that "profess they know God, but in works deny him are to be counted abominable amongst all christians." *Tit. i. 16.*

It

It is not therefore real and inward christianity in the heart that can give any man a right to communion in outward ordinances, unless it be professed in a credible manner to the world; nor can the want of such real and inward religion exclude any person from communion while he makes such a credible profession, for God only is the judge of hearts and not man, we must act according to outward appearances: There will be hypocrites in the church of *Christ* in this world, and there is no help for it: "The wheat and tares will grow together in the same field till the time of harvest." *Matth. xiii. 30.* The day of judgment is the only time to decide the matter completely, and distinguish hypocrites for ever from real christians; and therefore all that have the credible form and appearance of christianity must be admitted into the church of *Christ* on earth.

This is the common sentiment and practice of all the reformed churches, "that a credible profession is the general term of communion," though they differ about some particular circumstances of this profession that go to make up the credibility of it. These things are so generally acknowledged by the most and best of writers of our day, that I shall not stay here to prove them, and my business in this discourse is with those christians that allow and acknowledge what I have already said.

Now a credible profession of christianity implies these two things. First, that the matter professed be of such a nature, and declared in such a manner, as may render the profession credible; and, secondly, there must also be some person or persons to whom that profession must appear credible, and who must be judges of the credibility of it.

I shall begin with the last of these and dispatch it soon, because I mention it only as a needful introduction to the chief questions relating to the particular terms of christian communion.

Q U E S T I O N I I .

Who are the proper judges of the credibility of our profession.

S E C T I O N I .

JESUS *Christ* in his word is the supreme judge of what is truth, and what is duty; what sort of persons ought to be admitted to christian communion, and who should be forbid. But as he is absent from us, and speaks not but by his word, and his word does not apply it's own rules to particular persons, *John, Thomas, William, &c.* in every age and nation, there is a necessity that some persons must judge and determine whether *John, Thomas, William, &c.* have these characters of worthy communicants, which *Christ* has appointed in his word.

Every man for himself must use his own best judgment in searching his heart, and trying himself by the word of God, whether he has complied with the terms of salvation, and he must judge for himself too whether it be his duty to propose himself to christian communion: But no man must determine for himself whether he shall be received to communion with others, and partake of their sacreds. No man can impose

pose himself upon a church, merely because he thinks himself qualified : This would lay all the garden of *Christ* waste again, throw down all the fences, and reduce it to a mere wilderness : This supposition is too wild to be admitted.

If therefore a credible profession of christianity be the term of communion appointed by *Christ* in his word, there must be some present and living judges of the credibility of this profession ; and I know not who can be so proper to judge as those persons with whom communion is desired. This is not a matter transacted merely between a minister and a single christian, for the Lord's supper is not to be administered but in a community ; as *1 Cor.* xi. 20, 21, 33. "The church must come together to one place, and they must tarry for one another." There must be therefore the consent of the community or society, to admit a person to share in and partake of the sacred things in communion with them. This ordinance of *Christ* represents the communion of his members in one body, by the one bread and one cup, *1 Cor.* x. 16, 17. And the duties of church-fellowship, to which we then engage ourselves, are mutual duties between a community or society of christians, therefore there must be a consent on both sides ; and as a person must judge concerning the society, whether he will join himself to them, so the society must judge concerning him, whether they think him fit to be received as one of them.

It is into union with that society that the person proposing himself is to be admitted, either in a constant or occasional way ; and they give him the leave and privilege of becoming a partner with them, or a member of their body ; and surely the light of nature tells us, that every voluntary society must judge who shall be members of their society, and enjoy fellowship with them in their peculiar privileges.

It must be confessed indeed, that where this voluntary society professes a subjection to the will and law of any sovereign or superior power, and this sovereign has given them a rule whereby they are bound to admit persons into their society, in this case, their own mere arbitrary will and pleasure cannot violate or neglect this rule without guilt ; nor can they appoint any new rules, and make them necessary terms and conditions of such admission : And this is the case of all christian churches. For though they are so many voluntary societies, yet *Christ* their common Lord and sovereign has appointed the general rule of admitting members into his churches, viz. that "all such shall be admitted who make a credible profession of christianity."

But wheresoever there is such a superior acknowledged rule given to direct in this affair, still the society itself must judge concerning the true sense and just application of this rule to particular cases. It is this society that will suffer reproach, and bear the trouble of it, if a person admitted, prove scandalous and unworthy ; and it is but reasonable therefore that they should determine whether he be a person fit and worthy to come among them or no ; but still according to the rules of *Christ*, so far as they can understand his meaning. And as this is the voice and language of common reason, so it is also the appointment of *Christ* in his word, and this was the practice of the primitive times, as I shall shew hereafter.

The society ought surely to have the same liberty which the proposed person has, and if he has liberty to judge whether he should seek communion with them, they ought to have liberty to judge whether they should receive him. Each has a right to judge of the sense and application of the rules of scripture to direct their own actions.

Now since there can be no regular or proper christian communion held and maintained but in and with a church of *Christ*, we must enquire into the nature of the

christian church to find out which are the persons in, or of this church, that must judge and declare others fit for communion with it.

SECTION II. The church of *Christ* is either visible or invisible. The invisible church includes all the real saints that are in heaven or on earth. But our question has not to do with the church in this sense.

The whole visible church of *Christ* upon earth, consists of all those persons in the world that make a visible and credible profession of the christian religion, however scattered through all nations, and whether joined together by mutual agreement in particular societies, or not. The new testament sometimes useth the word church in this sense, *Matth.* xvi. 18. *1 Cor.* xii. 28. and other places; and it is in this sense when a person is baptized, he is said to be received into the christian church, for hereby he becomes a member of the catholic church visible on earth.

But all this vast scattered multitude can never maintain and perform acts of christian communion together in the Lord's supper, which is the other chief ordinance of special communion: Nor indeed can they keep up the public honour of God, a public profession of the name of *Christ*, nor the duties of public worship, without their being divided into particular societies, which agree at stated times and seasons to come together to one place, as the apostle expresses it, for purposes of christian worship, *1 Cor.* xi. 18, 20. and xiv. 23.

Such "a society or congregation of persons, both men and women, making a credible profession of christianity, and united by mutual agreement or consent to meet together usually at the same time and place for the performance of christian worship," is a church of *Christ*; and this is the clearest and plainest notion that I can frame of a particular church of *Christ*, according to the language of the holy scripture. Consult the book of *Acts*, consult the sacred epistles, where the word church is used at least forty or fifty times in this sense.

I will not deny but the word church, even where it does not signify the catholic church, visible or invisible, may in some few places be used for a larger number of christians than could meet in one place, as the church of *Jerusalem* in the very beginning of christianity, while christians multiplied faster than they could be well formed into regular distinct societies; yet even in some of those places perhaps it includes no more than did meet for some special purpose. See *Acts* xi. 22. and xv. 22.

The word church may also in a few other places be used for a smaller collection of christians, that might occasionally meet, or perhaps dwell together, as the "church in the house of *Aquila* and *Priscilla*," *1 Cor.* xvi. 19. and in the house of *Philemon*, *Philem.* verse 2.

But the most common acceptation of the word church, where it signifies a visible company of christians, implies such a number, as met usually by common consent in one place for christian communion, in stated and solemn ordinances of worship, and especially the Lord's supper, as in the forecited texts of the epistle to the *Corinthians* and many others.

This is the church that is described in the nineteenth article of the church of *England*, viz. "A congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to *Christ's* ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same."

Yet let it be noted here, that such a society as this may be properly called a church, when their preachers, ministers, or all their officers are dead, or even before they have

have any minister, or any officers fixed amongst them; and without doubt they have power to receive any person that desires it, and makes credible profession of christianity, into their society, having judged his profession credible, and declared him in their judgment fit for christian communion. But it would lead me too far from my present design to insist upon particular proof of these things, which has been often done, and which is now the pretty general opinion of men that are not attached to any particular party, but give themselves leave to think freely, and follow the dictates of reason and revelation.

SECTION III. The ordinances of the gospel must be administered in a church with decency, and honour, and spiritual advantage: But the whole body of the church cannot thus administer them; therefore it is necessary that these concerns be committed to such persons as are peculiarly fitted for those administrations by knowledge and prudence, and all proper talents; and the church ought to be furnished with such officers who should be chosen and solemnly set apart, devoted and ordained to this work. The particular forms of their choice and ordination do not enter into the present argument.

The business of receiving members into the communion of the church, and the forbidding or excluding of them is a matter of as serious importance as the administration of other christian ordinances; and oftentimes it is attended with great difficulty. A whole assembly of men cannot be supposed to manage this affair altogether with decency and regularity, and without confusion: Therefore it is abundantly convenient, if not necessary, to commit the first and special care of these matters also to particular persons of human and divine knowledge superior to the rest; persons of great skill in the things of God, in serious religion, and in the affairs and tempers of men, qualified with due zeal for the honour and purity of the ordinances and churches of *Christ*, and filled with great tenderness and compassion to the souls of men; persons of good judgment and discretion, of great meekness, condescension and charity, that if possible they may not give occasion to the church to exclude any of the sheep of *Christ* from the visible fold, nor admit unclean animals into the flock.

The chief officers of a particular church, whether they be called bishops, ministers, presbyters, or elders, pastors, guides, leaders, governors or rulers, &c. are the proper persons to have the first oversight and chief care of this matter; and in our churches it is committed chiefly to them, to take account of the profession of christianity made by persons desiring communion, to give some general notices of it to the church, or a more particular narrative where it is desired; and to receive them to communion either with the explicit and formal vote of all the congregation, or only by their implicit and silent consent.

But if it happen that there is but one minister or presbyter in that church, or if the ministers are young men of small experience in the world, it is usual and proper that some of the eldest, gravest and wisest members be deputed by the church to join with and assist the ministers in the care and management of this affair.

Those persons who have been chosen by the church, and have been solemnly devoted by the church, and have also solemnly devoted themselves to that office or service, have been usually called ruling elders. And such officers have been supposed to be described in those words of *St. Paul to Timothy*, 1 *Tim. v. 17.* "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour," that is, respect and maintenance: But especially if they are also preachers as well as rulers, "if they labour in the word and doctrine.

doctrine. These are supposed to be called governments, *1 Cor.* xii. 28. and *Rom.* xii. 8. "He that ruleth"—. But if such persons are but appointed to assist a minister, especially one who is young and unexperienced in the government of the church, I will never quarrel with any man, whether he will call it a divine order, or merely prudential, since the scripture has not determined this matter with uncontested evidence.

These ministers, officers and persons so deputed by the church, are therefore the first proper judges of the credibility of any person professing the christian faith, and desiring communion with that church; for these are supposed to be qualified above others with christian knowledge and wisdom, and they are also appointed by the church to the care and conduct thereof.

Yet in this case they are not so absolute and supreme, but that the congregation must some way or other approve of their judgment, either by an explicit vote, or at least by a silent consent, before the proposed communicant is received to the communion of the church; for it is still the consent of the church that must make him a member of it. Or the congregation may for just reasons disallow of their judgment in particular cases; and if they proceed obstinately to mismanage their affairs of this kind, and especially in notorious instances, and make the terms of admission larger or narrower than *Christ* has appointed, or if they notoriously misapply the right rules of admission or exclusion to wrong persons, that church or society may reverse their sentence, and act according to their own judgment, and if it be needful may also call them to an account for it, and assume the judgment, exclusion and admission of communicants intirely and immediately into their own hands; till they shall chuse other officers who shall preside in this affair, and exercise this power more agreeably to those sacred rules and terms of communion which that society believes to be the will of *Christ* in his word.

SECTION IV. This conduct of affairs seems to be founded on the very nature of religious societies, and the common light of reason; and it seems also to be much countenanced by a variety of scriptures in the new testament, where the directions of the apostle concerning the receiving and excluding of members are addressed to the churches of *Christ* at *Rome*, at *Corinth*, at *Thessalonica*, &c. I might multiply quotations to this purpose, *Rom.* xv. 7. "Receive ye one another, as *Christ* also received us to the glory of God." *Rom.* xvi. 1, 2. "I commend unto you *Phebe* our sister,— that ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints." *1 Cor.* v. 4. "In the name of our Lord *Jesus Christ* when ye are gathered together, and my spirit with the power of our Lord *Jesus Christ* to deliver such an one unto *Satan*, &c." Verse 7. "Purge ye out therefore the old leaven." Verse 13. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." *2 Thess.* iii. 6. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly."

Though the apostle *Paul* gives directions to *Timothy* and *Titus* about the rejection of heretics, yet it must be noted that these two were extraordinary persons, evangelists divinely commissioned and endowed, and by virtue hereof might act in a superior way in every church whither they were sent; and they were to teach the churches the orders of *Christ*: Nor does it follow that every ordinary minister has the same power; nor indeed does it appear that *Timothy* and *Titus* were to exercise it without the churches consent. For *St. Paul* himself when he gave apostolical orders for excommunicating the incestuous *corinthian*, would have it done when the whole church

church was gathered together, and as an act of that particular community; as in the texts before cited.

Though the seven epistles in the second and third chapters of the *Revelation* are inscribed to the angels or ministers of those seven churches, and directions are there given about the casting out false worshippers and idolaters, yet it is evident that the contents of these epistles are plainly addressed to the whole body of christians that made up those several societies or churches, and they were to cast out idolaters, &c. from among them, as an act of the churches by their ministers.

Though ministers and elders are sometimes called guides and rulers, &c. yet it is never to be understood in so absolute a sense, as to take all power away from the society or congregation, and leave the ministers to tyrannize as they please over the churches, and, like *Diotrephes*, to admit and exclude whom they will; for which usurpation the apostle *John* severely censures him. 3 *John* verses 9, 10.

Now when such a mode of admission into churches as I have described, by the ministrations of the elders, and the consent of the church, has the light of nature and reason leading us into it, and scripture gives frequent countenance to it by various rules and examples, it does not fall very short of a sacred institution.

SECTION V. But it will be objected here, “that it may happen that the ministers may be in the right, and the people in the wrong, in their judgment in particular cases: And must the vote of the people decide such an affair, against the opinion of ministers, elders, or rulers?”

I answer, in the first place,

Answer I. That when any person is proposed to the church, concerning whose admission the minister and people are not agreed, it is much better to persuade that person to seek communion with some other church, rather than occasion strife and debate betwixt the people and the minister. But if that cannot be conveniently, surely it is more adviseable in itself, and more acceptable to God, that any single person should deny himself the benefit of special ordinances, at least for a season, than become a bone of contention, and perhaps a sword of division, in a christian church. A person of a true christian temper would not willingly admit a new member, nor be admitted, to the real offence and grief of any persons, that were there before.

I say, in the next place,

Answer II. That if this method of peace cannot obtain, but admission of the persons still pressed and pursued, it is the duty of the minister to endeavour, by all proper arguments, to convince and persuade the people, and lead them to practise what he esteems the mind of *Christ* in this case, and with much “gentleness to instruct them that oppose themselves.” 2 *Tim.* ii. 24. If this will not do, then he should lay the laws of *Christ* before the people, with great and awful solemnity, and acquaint them with the terms of communion which *Christ* has appointed, according to his own best understanding of the gospel: He may charge them, in the name of *Christ*, to receive or exclude such persons only whom *Christ* appoints to be received or excluded; and that as they will answer it at the bar of *Christ*. But if the people persist in their own judgment still, in opposition to the minister, they must be left to answer it to *Christ* their judge; for *Christ* has left no infallible vicegerent here on earth, to govern his churches contrary to their own sense and interpretation of his written word.

It may be proper on such an occasion, that some friendly methods of private conference should be tried, and the reconciling assistance of other prudent ministers and christians

christians desired. But if these attempts prove vain and ineffectual, and the difference still remains, there is no power on earth, that I know, which can authoritatively determine any minister to give the sacred ordinances of *Christ* contrary to his conscience; nor can any power on earth command and constrain a christian church to receive a person to their communion, whom they in their consciences judge unworthy of it; therefore, rather than dwell together in endless contentions, the minister must peacefully resign his office in that church.

And the same rule must be followed in many other cases, wherein a minister and people resolve to disagree, besides in this point of admission to their communion, or exclusion from it. For it is better that the minister should leave himself to the providence of God for further service, than that a church of *Christ* should be rent in pieces by a minister's resolved continuance amongst them, and making parties and wars in so sacred a society. There is nothing perfect in human affairs on earth, where knowledge and grace are so imperfect. We must not expect complete purity and peace, till we arrive at the blessed communion of the church in heaven: Yet I may venture to affirm, that things would scarce ever arise to this extreme height of difference, if christian charity and love, humility and mutual condescension, were but more universally taught and practised, and the furious and narrow spirits of men tempered and enlarged, according to the glorious pattern of the apostles of *Christ*.

SECTION VI. Here will occur another enquiry also; and that is, "when the congregation itself is divided in their sentiments, how must any proposed question be determined? Or whether a proposed communicant must be admitted?"

I answer; in all such cases, the light of nature and the common usage of mankind have determined it, that the greater number should carry the question according to their sentiments, and the lesser ought to submit.

But I would take the liberty to give my opinion in point of prudence thus: That though, in questions of less moment, it is proper enough that the major vote should decide the case, yet, in an affair of considerable importance, such as the choice of a minister, or the receiving a member to constant communion, &c. if it were possible, I would obtain an universal concurrence of all the church; for it would be better, if such a thing could be so managed, as, that no old member of the church be made uneasy by receiving a new one; much less should a church, that will act with prudence, admit a new member contrary to the sentiments of their minister, or give occasion of grief to him, as I have before hinted. But surely, I would never determine the affair only by a majority of one or two voices; for this will be in danger of giving so great an uneasiness to a considerable number of the church, though they happen to be the minor part, that oftentimes it will administer occasion for strife, division and separation.

There is one piece of prudence that we may learn from our greatest enemies, the pope, and the conclave of cardinals; who, in the election of a new pope, never appoint the person but by the vote of two thirds of the college of cardinals; that in an affair of such importance, there may be no dangerous contention of parties after the person is elected. And I should think this so valuable a rule of prudence in the sacred affairs of the church of *Christ*, that no matter of moment should ever be determined, unless two thirds or more of the congregation agree to it. And indeed, if there be a firm opposition made, but by two or three considerable members, against the admission of any new communicant, I would not be hasty to admit the person,

but

but rather persuade him to delay, or to seek communion elsewhere, than endanger the peace of a whole church.

I desire it may be noted here, that I have only delivered my private opinion concerning the distinct power of elders, ministers, and votes of the people, in admission of members to the communion of the church: But whether the power of receiving or excluding be vested entirely in the people, or in the minister, or in both together; whether by a majority of votes, or universal consent of a particular church it equally serves the purpose of my argument in most of the following questions upon this subject.

I put this note only to secure my readers against any prejudice or hasty judgment against the following parts of the book, though they should happen to differ from me in the present question.

Q U E S T I O N III.

What are the particular terms of christian communion? Or, what things are necessary to make the profession of christianity credible?

SECTION I. Having enquired who are the persons that must judge of the credibility of our profession in order to christian communion, we proceed next to inquire, "what things go to make up a credible profession;" and we must take great care in this matter not to make new terms and conditions of our own, which *Christ* the Lord and king of his church has not made; nor to insist upon any thing as necessary to render a profession credible, which may not be fairly deduced from the rules and examples recorded in the new testament, and the application of them to our present age, according to the different circumstances of times, places, and persons.

It must be granted that there are several parts of necessary conduct in christian churches and ordinances, that arise from the very nature and reason of things, from the very being of societies, and from the circumstances of all human affairs; and we must not expect that all these should be dictated by divine revelation, and written down with all their minute particulars in express words of scripture. It would be endless for the sacred writers to have attempted it, and most unreasonable for us to expect it: For the light of nature and reason is given us by God himself for our direction, as well as the light of revelation; and whatsoever rules may be drawn by plain reasoning, and by easy and necessary inference from the comparison of scripture-times with our own, may and ought to be esteemed a part of our direction in these affairs, as well as the express words of scripture; for scripture itself often gives us but very short and imperfect hints of the whole process of civil or ecclesiastical transactions. This shall be more fully made appear, when I come to answer an objection raised from primitive practice.

After a diligent search into the holy scripture, and careful observation of christian churches and their affairs, these three things appear to me to be necessary, at least in our times, to make a profession of christianity sufficiently credible for christian communion.

- First, A confession of all the necessary articles of christian religion.
- Secondly, A professed subjection to all the necessary rules of christian duty.
- Thirdly, Such a blameless and holy practice in life, as may make the profession of the lips appear, in the common judgment of men, to be the sincere sense of the heart.

Note, under the first head, I say, a confession of all the necessary articles of christian religion, rather than the christian faith, that I may plainly include the practical articles of repentance and new obedience, &c. as well as the doctrinal ones.

Reason and revelation, nature and scripture, seem to make these three things necessary to a credible profession of christianity.

For if a man makes never so fair an appearance of christian duties in his practice, yet if in words he refuse to profess the christian faith, or deny any necessary doctrine or duty of it, he is not worthy of christian communion.

Or if a man give never so good an account of his knowledge and belief of all the articles of the christian religion, and his moral conversation and carriage towards men, has been generally blameless in the eye of the world; yet if he utterly refuse to declare his sincere intention to practise any of the plain and necessary duties of the christian religion, he cannot be accounted worthy of christian communion.

Or if his words make never so full a confession of all the doctrines and duties of christianity, and profess a sincere belief of and submission to them, yet if in his constant practice he be a liar, an adulterer, a drunkard, a known cheat, or a robber, &c. his wicked practice makes his profession incredible, he is not worthy of christian communion.

SECTION II. But I would deliver my thoughts more fully on these three particulars that make up the credibility of a profession, and shew what is implied in each of them.

First, a confession of all the necessary articles of christian religion, includes in it those articles that are necessary to salvation, and those that are necessary to maintain and practise this communion; which two are certainly different from each other.

Though it has been often said in a charitable way, and with very good reason in general discourse, that "there should be nothing required in order to christian communion which is not necessary to salvation," yet this cannot exclude the knowledge of what christian communion is. The very nature of the thing requires that we should know how to practise this communion, before we can actually practise and enjoy it. Now as the Lord's Supper itself is not of absolute necessity to salvation, the things necessary to communicate in the Lord's supper, must imply something more than merely the things necessary to salvation; as I shall also make plainly appear under the seventh question, which will be entirely employed on this first part of christian profession and therefore I proceed to the second.

SECTION III. Secondly, a professed subjection to all the necessary rules of christian duty, includes in it not only those duties that are necessary to salvation, but those duties that are necessary to practise christian communion.

The first sort of christian duties are those that are necessary to salvation, such as the fear, love, and worship of God; faith, love and obedience towards our Lord *Jesus Christ*; repentance of sin, and a humble trust or hope in the promises of the gospel, as shall be shewn at large under the seventh question. Now this profession does

does not signify a mere engagement or promise hereafter to fulfil these duties, but also a profession that we have begun to practise them already; for we are not received into a church in order to receive *Jesus Christ* the Lord, but upon a credible profession that we have received *Jesus Christ* already, *Rom. xv. 7.* "Receive ye one another as *Christ* has received us." We must have therefore some evidence and hope that we have received *Christ* in all his necessary offices, as our Lord and Saviour, and consequently that he has received us, before we should propose ourselves to be received by any visible church.

Now if a man professes repentance, it implies that he has been made sensible of sin, that he has been taught the evil of it, that he mourns for what is past, and is daily watching against it. If a man professes faith in *Christ* as a propitiation and atonement, it implies that he is acquainted with his guilt in the sight of God, that he is in danger of divine wrath, and that he is not able to make atonement for his own sins, and therefore he flies for refuge to *Jesus Christ*, that he may obtain peace with God. If he professes a hope of heaven, it implies in it that he is endeavouring to prepare for this heaven; for every man that hath this hope purifieth himself. *1 John iii. 3.* If he professes to take *Christ* for his example, it implies a desire and attempt to imitate our blessed Lord in self-denial, patience, zeal, &c.

In order to make this profession of our faith and hope credible, it is the custom of some churches to require no more than the person's own general profession that he does believe, and repent, and hope, as in *Acts viii. 37.* "I believe, &c." It is the custom of other churches to desire also some further evidences of the truth of his faith, hope, and repentance, by a more particular account of some of those things which are implied in the exercise of those graces; and this has been usually called, though not properly, the "rendering a reason of the hope that is in him," as *1 Pet. iii. 15.*

The first of these methods hath considerable advantages towards the enlargement of particular churches; and, so far as I can judge, such churches seem to require all that is absolutely necessary to the nature and being of a church of *Christ*.

The second has also some valuable advantages towards the well-being of a church, and the purity and the profit thereof in the inward and experimental parts of christianity, though some persons of extreme bashfulness may have been hereby discouraged and hindered from christian communion.

Both of these methods have some advantages, and some inconveniencies; and it is not my design at present to decide which of the two has the greatest; but this is certain, that every church must judge for itself how large, or how narrow; how general, or how particular a profession of christianity must be, in order to render it credible to themselves; yet let each church take heed that they make not the door of admission larger or straighter than *Christ* has made it.

The second sort of christian duties are those that are necessary to practise christian communion, especially if constant communion be desired, such as, to meet at the same time, and in the same place with some church of *Christ*, to perform christian worship with them there, to agree to the general methods of worship, the customs, order, and discipline that are practised in that church, so far as they can find them agreeable to the will of *Christ* in his word, or so far as they are necessary to maintain the being, order and peace of all religious societies. This is so much, and so plainly implied in the very nature of communion or fellowship, that it is always supposed to be consented to, even where it is not expressly mentioned; this will appear more evident under the next question.

This profession of consent to the worship or order of that church, does not forbid or prevent any person from attempting to reform any mismanagements in the worship or discipline of the church by argument and friendly persuasion; but only it restrains him from all tumultuous and irregular proceedings, in order to such reformation; according to the great canon of the apostle, "let all things be done decently, and in order," 1 Cor. xiv. 40. It is upon this account he forbids the *Corinthians* to speak with unknown tongues without interpretation, to break in upon the public worship, or for several persons to speak all at once, &c. and such natural rules of decency as these, may, in some sense, be called the commands of our Lord, verse 37. to which we owe a professed subjection.

But if a man cannot consent to the most constant and essential forms of ministration, worship and discipline, as practised in that church, it is far better that he should join himself to some other society, whose chief practices and government are more agreeable to his own sentiments.

SECTION IV. The third thing that goes to make up the credibility of our profession, is "such a blameless and holy practice in life, as may make the profession of the lips appear, in the common judgment of men, to be the sincere sense of the heart:" By which we are not to understand a perfection of virtue, or a freedom from every vice; for there is no man living on earth, that doth good, and sinneth not; in many things we offend all; and the best of men have reason to complain, that the evil they would not do, sometimes prevails over them, and they are "led captive to the law of sin," *Jam.* iii. 2. *Rom.* vii. 19, 20.

But it is necessary that persons professing christianity should be free from all gross and scandalous sins, nor be guilty of those crimes in their allowed practice, which in many places of scripture exclude men from the kingdom of heaven; 1 Cor. vi. 9. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. v. 11. "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat:" And if this text forbids us to keep free and sociable converse with such persons, or to sit down at our tables with those who profess christianity, and practise wickedness, much more does it become a church to exclude them from it's sacred society and fellowship, and to forbid them to sit down at the table of the Lord. Common railers and slanderers, such as the apostle *James* describes, are to be shut out from communion; *Jam.* i. 26. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain;" that is, his religious performances are evidently ineffectual for his own salvation; therefore while he indulges his tongue in a scandalous liberty, his pretences and profession of christianity are vain and incredible, and consequently he has no right to christian communion. The glory of God who is holy, the honour of our Lord *Jesus Christ* who is our pattern of holiness, the credit of the gospel which is a doctrine according to godliness, as well as the common sense of mankind, exclude all such persons from societies of strict and pure religion.

In the very first dawning of the gospel, *John* the baptist, the forerunner of *Christ*, forbid the professing *Pharisees* from baptism, for want of fruits of repentance answerable to their profession, *Matt.* iii. 7, 8. And in following times the *ephesian* converts made

made their faith appear by confessing what they believed, and shewing their deeds. *Acts* xix. 18, 19. And if there be not a frequent account of such instances in scripture, it is because the nature and reason of things render the necessity of it sufficiently evident without many express instances.

The enquiry of a church into the conversation of the person who desires it's communion, may be adjusted and regulated under these four heads, viz. whether he be sober, just, and good, as well as religious. So much of these four characters as lie within the public observation of the world, are necessary in order to become a member of the church.

1. Whether he be sober and temperate in some good measure; free from the vices of drunkenness, uncleanness, violent wrath, railing, revenge, &c. for otherwise it is plain he cannot belong to *Christ*, "they that are *Christ's* have crucified the flesh with it's affections and lusts," *Gal.* v. 24. and the foregoing scriptures I have cited run much upon this point.

2. Whether he be just and honest among his neighbours, a man of fair dealing, faithful to his word, sincere and without hypocrisy in the common affairs of life; for if a person be of a designing, tricking and deceitful temper and carriage among men, how can we trust his profession in the things of God? Or receive it as credible? Besides, the unjust are expressly excluded the kingdom of God, *1 Cor.* vi. 8. "And all liars shall have their part in the burning lake," *Rev.* xxi. 8.

3. Whether he be good, kind, charitable. Whether he hath that love to his neighbour which is the fulfilling of the duties of the second table, *Rom.* xiii. 8, 9. Whatsoever we profess of faith, yet "without love we are nothing," *1 Cor.* xiii. 2. and it may be enquired too what love he has to fellow-christians, for it is an appointed mark of the disciples of *Christ*, *John* xiii. 35. "Hereby shall all men know ye are my disciples if ye love one another. If a man say I love God and hateth his brother he is a liar: He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" *1 John* iv. 20. Without love, and particularly to fellow-christians, he can never be fit for such a holy fellowship, which is to be managed all in love, and whereof love is one of the greatest duties.

4. Whether he be religious and godly. Though inward piety is chiefly to be known to men by the profession of the mouth, and the two foregoing general heads in some measure answer this end, yet there should be some appearances of piety also in our conversation in the world, in order to give us a full right to christian communion. In such an enquiry as this, at least it must be found that such a person is not a scoffer at religion, that he does not make a jest of things sacred, that he uses the name of God with reverence in common conversation, that he speaks honourably of *Christ*, and his gospel, and his ordinances upon just occasion, and that he frequents some places of religious worship; for we are to look diligently that there be no profane person in our churches, as well as no fornicator, *Heb.* xii. 15.

Thus I have given a particular account of those three things that join to make up the credibility of our profession, in order to be regularly admitted to the communion of a christian church.

SECTION V. *Objection.* But why must there be so many things required to make a profession of christianity credible in our day, beyond what was required in the primitive times? Then they only confessed *Christ* to be the *Messiah*, the Son of God, or that he was raised from the dead in order to baptism and admission into the church. So it was when many thousands were added to the church in one day; so the eunuch

when *Philip* baptized him, *Acts* viii. 37. So the jailor and *Lydia*, *Acts* xvi. 15, 35. and many others; or at most, their present works were thought sufficient to confirm their confessions, *Acts* xix. 18. "Many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds," without long enquiries into the whole of their faith, or the course of their conversation.

Answer I. The account that the scripture give these transactions is very short, yet sufficient to inform us that there was more discourse on both sides, in order to the baptizing their converts, than is expressly written down; for even the confessions that *Lydia* and the jailor made are not written, but it is said in general, they believed; therefore we are not to take it for granted there was nothing else required, because the scripture in those places mentions no more than a word or two of short confession.

Answer II. In several places where such transactions are recorded in scripture, there is no mention of their works or conversation at all; and surely no minister or church in our day would imagine, that a mere confession, "that *Jesus* is the *Christ*," without any further enquiry either after knowledge, faith, or works, is sufficient ground for admission to sacred ordinances; for then we must take in almost whole nations. Besides, if a man did make such a profession, "that *Christ* was the Son of God," and his conversation were blameless to outward appearance; yet who of our ministers, or which of our churches would receive him without some further enquiry into his knowledge of God, and *Christ*, and the gospel? Therefore it is sufficiently plain, by the acknowledgment and practice of those who make this objection, that they themselves do not think it necessary to confine their enquiries only to such a single sentence of profession as the scripture-history expresses, and seek no further.

Answer III. It is sufficiently evident to me, that the fundamental or necessary articles of religion are not the same in all ages and places; but more or less knowledge is necessary, in order to salvation, according to the degrees of divine revelation in several nations or ages. The belief of the crucifixion and resurrection of *Christ* was not fundamental in *Christ*'s own life-time; for when he spake of his own death, *Peter* replied, "far be it from thee, Lord, *Matth.* xvi. 22. This shall not be unto thee." And the rest of the apostles knew not certainly that *Christ* should rise from the dead, for some doubted even after his resurrection, *Matth.* xxviii. 17. Yet they were the chief of the church of *Christ* upon earth at that time. So in the very first promulgation of the gospel, before *Judaism* was quite destroyed, the apostles themselves had not so full a knowledge of christianity as they afterwards, by degrees, received from the instructions of the blessed Spirit. Many passages of scripture discover this, as *Acts* x. 14—17. and xv. 7—30. and *Gal.* ii. 2—14. At this time there was scarce any thing of the new testament written; and though the evidences of the christian religion were great, yet the opportunities of a large and extensive knowledge were exceeding few and small among the common converts, if compared with our age: Therefore the messiahship of *Christ*, his death, and resurrection, and exaltation, with a very few alterations from natural or *Jewish* religion, seem to be the chief things then necessary to believe in order to salvation, or to profess in order to communion.

But when in process of time the *Jewish* oecconomy was divinely destroyed, christianity grown to it's full perfection, the canon of scripture completed, and several christian truths and duties more plainly and expressly revealed, it may be well supposed that where this canon of scripture is freely published, God may require something more of christian knowledge in order to salvation, than in the very first years of the gospel. I speak this last proposition but modestly, and as a probable opinion

nion; but if this be true, then it clearly follows that there are more things necessary to make a profession of christianity credible at this day in most places of *England*, than were necessary even in *Judea* in the first years of christianity.

Answer IV. If the essentials of any doctrine were perfectly the same in all ages, yet the credibility of its profession is exceeding different, according to different circumstances of time, place and persons. Where hardships and sufferings attend the professors of any religion, a very slight profession of it will persuade me that a man understands it, and is very sincere in it; because he exposes himself to suffering by this means: But where there is full liberty given, or especially if external advantages attend it, there every one will be ready to profess, though he has little knowledge or sincerity.

Those first times of the gospel, were times of reproach and persecution; the sect of christians was every where spoken against, and death and dangers attended it on all sides. Now to confess the name of *Christ* amidst the reproaches of the world, against the opposition of the wise and the foolish, the *jews* and the *greeks*, the threatening of kings, and the violence of the people, was a more powerful and evident proof of the truth of their faith, than if they had made long speeches, and had the testimony of a continued blameless conversation in a land and age of christians. Surely that confession, which was sufficient for martyrdom, if their enemies knew it; must be sufficient for communion, when made known to the church. But in our age and nation where christianity is the profession of the time, and the country, a mere acknowledgment of the name, or death and resurrection of *Christ*, is not sufficient to prove us knowing or sincere christians; and there ought to be so much larger a confession, and so many credible circumstances attending it, before we can reasonably, or upon just grounds, believe a man to be a true christian. All these requirements which I have before mentioned being put together, do not amount to so credible a profession, as for a man to say boldly this one sentence, "I am a christian," in the face of death and martyrdom.

Answer V. I might add also in the last place, that a great number of the conversions of the primitive christians, were so sudden and surprising by the extraordinary effusion of the holy Spirit, that the very miracle of their conversion did sufficiently answer the end of a large and particular confession. The work of God on the souls of men was sometimes in an instant, and they were made believers, out of unbelievers, at once; the Spirit fell on them while they heard the word; and when they who just before professed judaism or heathenism, and neither knew nor loved *Jesus Christ*, confessed his name and his religion at once; the wonderful change was evident to all, and they had no long accounts to give either of their faith or conversion, their knowledge or conversation; nor was it required, because the miracle itself made their profession sufficiently credible. Besides, spiritual gifts were conferred on multitudes in that day as soon as they were converted, and gave sufficient evidence for acceptance unto baptism, as *Acts* x. 44, 46, 47. "While *Peter* yet spake these words, the holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered *Peter*, can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the holy Ghost, as well as we?"

He that well considers all these things, and sets the affairs of the primitive times in a due light, and thus compares them with our own, will see plainly that something more is necessary to make a profession of christianity credible in our day, than was needful in the first age of the church. And yet still we may be said to follow the
rules

rules and examples of scripture, while we require nothing more in order to communion than what is necessary to make our profession credible; for so much of this has been always required even in scripture-times, and the word of God, and the very nature of things seem to demand it.

Q U E S T I O N I V .

What is a church covenant? And whether it be necessary to christian communion?

BESIDES the things that have been already mentioned, as included in a credible profession of christianity, it is worth our enquiry, whether any solemn covenant be needful in order to communion. Now to answer this question we must distinguish between that communion which is fixed and constant in one church, or that which is only occasional.

By fixed, constant, and complete communion, I mean the joining myself to a particular church, so as to become a complete member of that religious society, engaging to perform at appointed times and places, my most usual public worship with that society rather than with others, to assist in all services necessary to support that society, and partake of all privileges of it for mutual edification and comfort, and to maintain the public honour of *Christ* in the world.

By occasional communion, I understand a mere participation of the general and special ordinances of the gospel with a particular church for a time, under the general character and claim of christianity, and so far as occasions of providence may make it convenient and desirable. But not to become properly a member of that particular society, nor be interested in the affairs, regulation or management of it.

Now for this occasional communion, there is no necessity that every such communicant should enter solemnly into a covenant or agreement with that particular church, any farther than only to partake of those special ordinances for a season in a decent and regular way. It is sufficient for this sort of communion, that a person make such a credible profession of christianity as has been before described, or that he be recommended by some other church, or the elders thereof, before whom he has made such a credible profession; or that it be some way ascertained to the church whose communion he desires, that he has done it.

But where fixed and complete fellowship with a particular society is desired, the very nature of things seems to require it, that there should be such a mutual agreement among the persons that intend to practise this constant communion. This is part of the second thing requisite to make our profession credible, viz. a professed subjection to all the necessary duties of christianity, as will plainly appear by what follows.

A church is composed of such persons as agree to worship and walk together in all the ordinances of *Christ*, viz. to attend on the ministry or preaching of the word, on praying to God together, on speaking or singing the praises of God, and celebrating all the institutions of *Christ*, especially that great one, the supper of the Lord, which is called communion.

They

They devote themselves first to the Lord in public by their profession, as they have done before in secret; covenanting to walk with him in all his ordinances; then they give up themselves to one another, and they receive one another in the Lord, which is the word used most frequently in the new testament for admission into the communion of saints, or being solemnly acknowledged as fellow-christians, and consequently as having a right to special ordinances. They profess their agreement or consent to worship usually together, to attend usually on the ordinances of communion as administered in that church, and to fulfil all necessary duties of christian fellowship in a special manner towards one another for mutual edification, as far as God shall instruct and enable them: And this is called the church-covenant, which is in truth nothing else but a voluntary solemn agreement with some particular society, to practise those social duties of the christian religion among them at appointed times and places, which *Christ* himself has required in general to be practised somewhere when opportunity is found.

Such a consent or agreement to meet at stated times and places for social worship, is not indeed formally instituted in the new testament: But there are several passages in the new testament which very plainly suppose it, as will appear immediately. And the reason why it was not delivered in the form of a gospel institution is this, because it is a principle of natural religion; the light of reason teaches it, and upon this account it was not set down as an institution under the old testament, though doubtless the patriarchs and holy men of old practised it, ever since there was any such thing as public worship set up in the world: So the *Israelites* met and read the scripture, and prayed in their synagogues without the formality of a particular divine institution; wherever a synagogue was built, the neighbouring inhabitants by consent weekly worshipped there.

I confess where magistrates take upon them to impose a religion upon the people, and national and parochial churches are appointed by some assuming powers, this free covenant or agreement degenerates into a constrained consent; but such a free and explicate agreement is more necessary among those christians who are left to their own liberty, or who dissent from a national and established church.

This covenant has indeed been much censured both by the profane world, and by some fellow-christians: And it must be confessed that some few ministers and churches of rigid and narrow principles, have heretofore given too just an occasion for censure, by drawing up their particular church-covenants in a long form of writing, and inserting several things into them that were by no means necessary to common christianity, and such as favoured too much of a party-spirit; but churches and ministers in our age better understand christian liberty and true principles of charity. I know of none of these impositions in our day; and if our present practice in this matter be censured by any, I am persuaded it is merely for want of understanding it: For if it be fairly represented, as I have described it, it appears to be a piece of mere natural religion, and social worship; and is so far from being an addition to the rules of the gospel, or an imposition on the consciences of christians, that no voluntary religious society can possibly subsist without some such covenant. When any person therefore joins himself to, and becomes a member of a christian church, this covenant or mutual agreement is always implied where it is not expressed; and those that have been so weak as to ridicule the forms of it, yet are so wise as to practise the substance of it.

Indeed

Indeed the mere necessity and reason of the thing is so plain and convincing, that one would wonder that any man should speak against it, if he will but give himself leave to consider the following particulars.

1. How can there be a receiving of each other in the Lord, at the first forming of a church, if there be not a mutual agreement, or giving up of themselves to each other to worship the Lord together? Christians are commanded to do it, "that with one mind and one mouth they may glorify God." *Rom. xv. 6, 7.* And how can any particular member afterward be received to communion, if there be not such a society or church to receive him, and to which he may give up himself to walk with them in the Lord?

2. How can there be any social worship performed, if there be no agreement to worship together in the same place, and at the same time? If all the christians must always be at perfect liberty to worship where they will, and communicate every Lord's day at a different place, a minister may sometimes be left to preach to the seats and walls, if none are bound to attend on his ministrations: And on the other hand, surely the minister may take as much liberty as the people; and he may absent himself and worship elsewhere, when they are all gathered together and wait for a sermon. Thus many assemblies for worship may be without a teacher, and many teachers without an assembly, and some small assemblies have many teachers.

3. How can there be any provision made of a proper place of worship for a whole assembly, or any conveniencies or decencies that are requisite for sacred actions, without such an agreement? How can a table be appointed or furnished with bread and wine, and vessels to contain them, fit to distribute the Lord's supper, unless several persons have agreed upon it?

4. How can the minister be maintained if there be no societies agreeing to attend on their ministry, and support and encourage it? Yet this is a duty incumbent on all those who are ministered unto: *Gal. vi. 6. 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.* Each society is bound by the rules of the gospel to maintain and honour their own ministers "who labour among them in word and doctrine." *1 Tim. v. 17. and 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.*

5. How can the poor of *Christ* be fed and clothed, if christians are not distributed into distinct societies, and each take care of their own poor? *Eph. iv. 28.* To whom should the poor christians have applied of old, if not to their own societies? For single persons cannot, nor are they bound wholly to maintain them. They must therefore be distributed into distinct societies, that every poor christian may know where to apply for relief; and that each of the richer may know also to whom they should give their constant alms, and look upon themselves in a special manner bound to supply. If all the poor saints in a nation were straggling abroad, and belonged to no christian society, how should the richer persons, or richer societies know these are God's poor, and of the household of faith, whom they are bound in a special manner to take care of, *Gal. vi. 10.* unless they have made a profession to some church of *Christ*, and are known by this means?

So great is the necessity of these things to be done by particular societies, that christian princes and governors, in order to have these things regularly performed, have thrown all their dominions into the form of distinct parishes, or single congregations; though they have had not much regard to any rules of the new testament, in establishing their church worship and discipline in other parts of it.

6. How can the ordinances of censure and excommunication be ever administered, if there be no societies agreeing to walk and worship together? If any person be charged with a fault or heinous crime, he will reply, "he belongs not to any society, who

who shall assume a right to deal with him and censure him?" And it is impossible that the whole visible church of *Christ* can meet together, or take cognizance of such particular causes, and give censures, unless we set up a pope, or council, or conclave of cardinals to do all this, and constrain all particular churches to submit to their sovereign and universal dictates.

There must be therefore an agreement betwixt a company of professing christians, giving up themselves to one another, and receiving each other in the Lord, in order to maintain the church of *Christ* in the world, his gospel, or his honour; to support his poor, or his ministers, or the purity of his church, or of any holy ordinance. Receive therefore the apostle's exhortation. *Rom. xv. 6, 7.* "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father our Lord *Jesus Christ*.—receive ye one another as *Christ* also received us, to the glory of God."

Q U E S T I O N V.

When a person is once joined to a particular church, whether he may never worship with other churches occasionally, or change his fixed communion to another church?

In answer, That this agreement of worshipping together is not so strictly to be understood, as if none of those persons should ever worship any where else; for there are various occasions in the course of life, that may lead the members of one church now and then to worship with another. Since we all hold the same faith and worship in the essentials of it, we are to esteem ourselves in general communion with the whole visible church of *Christ*; and sometimes we join in worship with others, merely to testify our charity and christian fellowship with those that in the circumstantial of religion differ from us; sometimes to accompany a particular friend; to hear a particular minister; to attend on some special occasion of prayer, or preaching; on such occasions we may very reasonably worship with various assemblies: Or perhaps we may be called to travel from home, and to spend many seasons of worship absent from our own particular community, and then we join with those churches where providence may cast us.

When christians travel where they are unknown, or make any considerable stay in distant places, they should carry with them a letter of recommendation from the officers or members of their own church, to any churches of *Christ*, where they may come; such are the letters that *St. Paul* speaks of. *2 Cor. iii. 1.* "Do we need letters of commendation to you, or from you?" And thus he himself recommends christians to distant churches, as *Rom. xvi. 1, 2.* "I commend unto you, *Phoebe*, our sister, who is a servant at the church at *Cenchrea*, that ye receive her in the Lord as becometh saints," that is, that ye receive her to the participation of christian ordinances, as well as assist her in any civil affairs.

This agreement or church-covenant, therefore, only obliges persons, as far as they can with tolerable conveniency of affairs and spiritual edification, to make that church, of which they are members, the usual place of their worship, and especially their participation of the Lord's supper, whereby special communion is maintained.

The question concerning the changing of our fixed communion from one church to another, may be thus determined.

All church-fellowship is appointed for the public honour of God, for our mutual assistance and edification in spiritual things, and for the support of the interest and kingdom of *Christ* among men. Whosoever therefore any member cannot attain these ends in the particular church he belongs to, after solemn consideration and prayer to God for counsel, he may desire a dismissal to some other church, and upon these reasons the church ought to give it. A brother, or a sister, is not in bondage in such cases; and the pastoral office, and all "church power is for edification, and not for destruction," as *St. Paul* speaks, *2 Cor.* xiii. 10.

Now this necessity of changing our communion may happen several ways: As when a person removes his habitation to such a distance, as that he cannot conveniently attend and perform the duties of church-fellowship in that society; or when the church falls into pernicious errors and heresies; or when upon any other account his own edification in that church is not to be attained; or when other necessary circumstances of life, or religion, make his union to another church of much more importance. But in these cases let the conscience of a man be well informed, and let him duly consider all circumstances before he put this in practice: For it argues a light and changeable temper to be running always from one church to another, and unbecoming the spirit of the gospel. Yet where the reasons of removing this communion from one church to another are just and good, and after due application to the church, if they refuse to dismiss him, he may fairly depart without it, and join himself to any other church that is satisfied in his credible profession of christianity.

Q U E S T I O N VI.

Whether fixed communion with some particular church be a necessary duty: And whether any may be admitted to occasional communion, who are no fixed members of any church.

IT is a natural enquiry flowing from the former question, whether any person is at liberty to content himself merely with occasional communion, sometimes with one church and sometimes with another, without becoming a fixed member of any church at all? Or whether a church may forbid a person occasional communion, who refuses utterly to join in any fixed communion?

The duties of holy fellowship for the glory of God and mutual edification, which are most regularly practised in a state of fixed communion, are so many, and so plain in scripture, and in the reason of things, that very few persons can be exempted from them: For those duties are such as these, to attend on public ministrations together, to pray and confer together about spiritual things, with a sort of holy intimacy or friendship, to encourage and support the ministry, to maintain the poor, to uphold the public worship of God by assisting in the provision of a place, and all other external things necessary for public worship, to receive members into the church, to

censure

censure and reprove, and cast out scandalous members, to watch over one another in their holy conversation, &c. to admonish and to receive admonitions.

I grant that so many of these duties as can be conveniently performed toward all fellow-Christians, should never be omitted where providence gives just occasion; but since each Christian cannot watch over all others, worship with all others, assist toward the maintenance of all the poor, nor all the ministers, &c. those with whom he agrees to worship in a stated way, are the persons to whom he is most immediately called to fulfil these kind offices, and has fairer opportunities to do it. And as I have shewn before, that public worship could never be certainly, regularly and comfortably maintained without such a fixed communion, and every person that refuses such services to *Christ* and the church, must have very plain and constraining reasons to excuse his neglect.

Besides the privileges of fixed fellowship are, or should be, alluring and encouraging; such as, their opportunities of serving *Christ* in his public interest in the world, supporting his name among men, their vote in chusing ministers or officers of the church, and their interest in the prayers, cares and watchfulness of the church, for them, and over them, their special right to the spiritual assistance of the ministers and elders of that church in private counsels, admonitions, and prayers with them and for them; their own temporal support, assistance and relief by the church, if they fall into poverty, &c.

It is my opinion that scarce any person can be justly exempted, or excused, from fixed communion somewhere, but those, who by reason of their different opinions, unhappy temper, or some special circumstances of life, are under some sort of incapacity of fulfilling several of those duties, and yet by their credible profession appear worthy to partake of the special ordinances of the church.

And if there be any person to be found in such circumstances, I should think it is only such as these. 1. One that has no fixed abode, but his business of life is at all uncertainties, and calls him perpetually to change his residence: Such were the apostles and evangelists, and the itinerant preachers of the first century, together with their attendants, who seem to be settled members of no particular church. Or 2. Such a one that differs exceedingly in his sentiments in some important doctrines, or practical points of religion, from all the churches of *Christ* near him, and yet may be supposed to hold all the necessary articles of the Christian faith, but may not be so fit to assist as a member in the affairs of a church of so different opinions. Or lastly, there may be such a person as may give some credible evidences of true piety in his heart, but his natural temper is so violent, his spirit so various and inconstant, that he can scarce confine himself to the settled orders of any community, but will be more likely to divide a congregation, than to edify it in love.

Perhaps it may be lawful and proper; nay, I add further, perhaps it is a necessary duty at some seasons, and upon very good evidence of their Christianity, to receive such sort of persons as these to occasional communion, though they have no fixed relation to any particular church; and the general rules of Christianity will oblige them to perform several relative duties towards their fellow-Christians, and to help support the external charges of those churches, with whom for a season they hold fellowship.

But after all, I must confess that the special duties, which belong to a fixed settled communion of Christians, are so generally plain in scripture, and so necessary from the very nature of religious societies, as described under the fourth question, that in my opinion, any church of *Christ* has reason to make very careful enquiry into the

real christianity of a person who desires occasional communion only, but utterly refuses all manner of fixed communion with any church where he has proper opportunity; unless his habitation be always unsettled, or his circumstances very peculiar, or he can give some other just reason of his refusal to the church.

I should also add in this place, that if persons should be freely and readily indulged and tolerated in this sort of loose communion, because they may have some sort of appearance of reason for it, others that have much less reason, or none at all, might probably demand and expect it; and these examples would tend greatly to the dissolution and confusion of churches: In such a case, though it may be barely lawful, yet it seems not to be expedient, and therefore should not be commonly practised, since it leads to the ruin of churches, "rather than to their edification." 1 Cor. x. 23. except in cases extraordinary.

Another very obvious question arises here, viz. Whether a church, or religious society, may refuse a person who offers himself to become a fixed member of that church in constant and complete communion, and makes a visible and credible profession of his faith? Whether a church can lawfully forbid such a person to become a complete member, and restrain him only to a sort of occasional or incomplete communion?

Answer. Though it is certain that without such fixed societies or churches, public christianity could not be well maintained, and therefore far the greatest part of christians are certainly obliged to become members of some particular christian society; yet as there may be some peculiar cases which may excuse a person from fixed communion and membership, so there may be peculiar cases also which may excuse a church from receiving some persons to complete membership with them, though they may admit them to occasional communion.

Let it be considered, that by admitting a person to fixed communion, and making him a member of that particular society, he not only requires a right to join with the society in all the ordinances of the gospel and special communion, in public on the Lord's days, but he hath a right to be with them at any more private meetings of the whole church, and to consult and act in their special affairs: He has a right to attend on such meetings for considering of the circumstances and state of the church, for regulating things that are amiss, for altering any of their customs, for distributing monies to the poor, for chusing a pastor or other officers, for admitting members, and for exercising the discipline of the church, &c. He acquires also a right in joint-partnership to the temporal possessions of the society, suppose it be a meeting-house for public worship, vessels of plate for church communion, or any houses, or temporal goods or donatives, which may belong to that particular society.

Now though the laws of *Christ* require us to receive every visible christian, who desires it, to communion in public worship, and in special ordinances of the gospel, because he is fit for it, yet those laws do not require that every such person should be admitted to the peculiar counsels and affairs of any particular society, because perhaps he is really unfit for it. Perhaps they know, or have abundant reason to believe, that his different opinions, or his unhappy temper, or his peculiar circumstances, would render him a very troublesome member of it, that he would raise parties in the choice of officers, or in admission of members, or in distributing to the poor, or in the regulation of other church affairs; and therefore they allow him only occasional communion with them, which is all that seems to be his duty with regard to that particular church, and which is all the duty which the laws of reason, or of religion, seem to demand of them toward him.

Besides,

Besides, let it be further considered, that whatsoever instances of christian fellowship in sacred things the laws of *Christ* may demand for such a person, yet it is certain the laws of *Christ* do not demand for him any share in the temporal possessions of that religious society, nor in the distribution of their temporal things, unless it be perhaps to relieve him in some degree, if he be necessitous. Therefore the laws of *Christ* do not require that society to receive such a person to complete communion and membership, to introduce him into their councils and affairs, or to vest him in any of their temporal possessions, since it is evident he will become a very troublesome member, and endanger, if not destroy, the edification and peace of the particular society or church. "Let all things be done to edification:" 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26. "Follow those things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." *Rom.* xiv. 19.

Q U E S T I O N VII.

What knowledge is necessary for christian communion?

SECTION I. **U**NDER the third question I have shewn that the knowledge necessary to communion, includes in it both a knowledge of what is necessary to salvation, and a knowledge of what is further necessary to maintain and enjoy this holy communion: The very nature of things requires this.

First, Let us consider the things necessary to salvation. How many articles of the christian faith or practice, are necessary to our salvation; or in other words, how many fundamentals are there, is not expressly determined in any part of the scripture. It is a question that has troubled the christian churches almost two hundred years, ever since the reformation began, but has never yet been decided to the common satisfaction even of those that held the scripture to be the only and perfect rule of faith and practice. Therefore as every man must judge for himself, concerning the fundamentals of christianity, in order to examine his own heart, and evidence to himself his hopes of salvation; so every particular church must judge for itself, which are the fundamentals, or necessary articles of christianity, to examine those that propose themselves to communion, and evidence their right to it.

I grant this, that in determining the nature or number of necessary articles, the churches of *Christ* ought to govern their sentiments by the rules of scripture, as near as they can find them by comparing one place with another, and form their judgment in this matter by a large and extensive charity. A general love to mankind, the dutiful imitation of God our saviour, and the exemplary practice of the blessed apostles, oblige us to make as few articles necessary as is consistent with the great ends of the christian religion, and to impose nothing more upon the consciences of men in this respect, than we solemnly believe our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself imposes in his word, as we will answer it at the great day of his appearance. Yet it is certain, and without controversy, that there are several articles both of doctrine and duty, of such importance, that a man cannot be a true christian without them, nor have any just hope of christian salvation according to the gospel; and consequently, without the acknowledgement of the articles, a person may lawfully be refused communion.

Here

Here let me lay down this preliminary: That the fundamentals of religion, as I have proved before, are very different, in different ages and nations, according to the different degrees of revelation, and different advantages for knowing the truth: But ever since the time that the canon of scripture was finished, and where this canon is published and acknowledged, we may say in general, and with regard to church-communion, that the fundamentals of christianity are the same to this day; especially in such places of *Great-Britain, Ireland, &c.* where persons enjoy so great degrees of advantage for obtaining christian knowledge. What gracious allowances for want of capacity, or for want of means, in dark corners of *England*, or in *India*, God will make hereafter, is not my business to enquire into; but certainly, we are to admit none to christian communion who have not the knowledge that is essential to christianity. And though we cannot precisely reckon up the certain number of essential or fundamental articles, yet we may lay down such characters of them, as may assist and regulate the affairs of christian communion.

SECTION. II. We may begin therefore with negatives, and may boldly say, those cannot be fundamentals either of faith or practice, which are not very clearly revealed, either in express words, or in very plain, easy, and obvious consequences; they must be such as the meanest christian may be able to find by reading his bible, with sincere desire of truth, with holy diligence, and with humble prayer: For the "way of holiness and salvation is so plain, that fools shall not err therein." *Isai.* xxxv. 8. which may be explained by that text. *1 Cor.* i. 26, 27. "Not many wise are called, but the foolish things of this world," &c.

Those again cannot be fundamental which are only to be found in such verses of scripture, the authority whereof may have been any ways dubious or reasonably suspected. For fundamentals must have the strongest authority, as well as the plainest evidence, and that for the same reason. Upon this account, I would never call that a fundamental, which is not mentioned but in one single text of scripture; for it is possible, that such a single text might be contested by critics, or transcribed false, by the neglect or iniquity of men, or be falsely translated, either by ignorance or design. Fundamentals must be revealed in several parts of the bible, and appear to be the frequent design and subject of the holy writers; that so the faith and salvation of plain christians might be secured against the danger of fatal mistakes, and the subtilty of critics, or cunning deceivers.

Such articles also can never be fundamental, as have no necessary influence on the honour of God, the good of our neighbour, or our own holiness and final salvation: For since the honour of God, and the good of men, is the very end of the gospel, that can never be an essential part of it, without which, these ends may be happily and gloriously attained.

SECTION III. The plain and positive characters of true fundamental articles in christian religion, seem to be such as these.

1. Those without which there can be no religion: Such as, that there is a God; that this God is to be worshipped, believed, and obeyed; that he governs man in this life in order to a final judgment; that there is a future state; and rewards and punishments hereafter, according to our different behaviours here.

2. Those also seem to be essential, necessary, and fundamental articles of the christian religion, which are the chief points that raise it above natural, or distinguish it from the *jewish* religion, and which are represented in scripture as the very foundation

dation and substance, the mystery and glory, of the gospel; such are these:

“That all mankind are sinners; are destitute of holiness and happiness; and sinful man cannot recover himself to the favour and image of God; and there is no way of access to God for him but by a mediator.” *John* xiv. 6. “No man cometh to the Father but by me:” And I take this doctrine of the necessity and use of a mediator, to be the groundwork of the difference betwixt natural and revealed religion.

“That this mediator is the Son of God dwelling in flesh; or, that the Son of God has taken upon him human nature for this very end, to become a mediator:” This seems to be properly the great mystery of the gospel, and it should be acknowledged without controversy, that “God was manifest in the flesh.” *1 Tim.* iii. 16.

“That *Jesus of Nazareth* is this glorious person, this only mediator. There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man *Jesus Christ*.” *1 Tim.* ii. 5. “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” *John* viii. 24.

“That, in order to the salvation of man, *Christ* is appointed by the Father to instruct us, as a teacher or prophet; to make an atonement for our sins, and to intercede for us as a priest; and to give us laws, and rule and judge us as our Lord and king:” For he has given us most frequent, plain, and express notices in his word, that this is the way whereby he saves us; and if we know not so much as this of the method of his salvation, how can we apply to him for it, or receive it at his hands with any degree of faith?

“That the Lord *Jesus Christ* is to be believed, trusted in, received, and submitted to, under these several characters which he sustains, by all that would partake of this salvation:” For if he be absolutely rejected in either of these his offices, we have no reason to expect him to fulfil any part of his salvation to us, or in us. “If we refuse him that speaketh from heaven as our prophet, we cannot escape.” *Heb.* xii. 25. If we utterly reject his proper sacrifice as a priest, there “remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation.” *Heb.* 26, 27. And if we refuse this man as a “king to reign over us, we shall be slain before his face.” *Luke* xix. 27. He will “take vengeance on them that obey not his gospel.” *2 Thess.* i. 8.

“That God forgives repenting sinners, and is reconciled to them, not for the merit of their repentances, but for the sake of what *Jesus Christ* had done and suffered.” This is a very evident consequent from the former doctrines, and has a plain and necessary connexion with them. It seems to be the very substance of the gospel, that we are “justified or saved, not by our own works, but by the grace of God abounding to sinners, through the redemption which our Lord *Jesus Christ* hath obtained; and that *Jesus Christ* redeemed us from the curse, by bearing that curse for us; and that God is at peace with us for his sake; that the gospel is the word of reconciliation; that God was in *Christ*, reconciling sinners to himself; because he that knew no sin was made sin, or a sin offering, for us, that we, who are sinners, might be made righteous, and accepted of God through him.” *2 Cor.* v. 18—21. See *Rom.* iii. 20—25. *Ephes.* ii. 8, 9. and many other places.

“That though we cannot obtain the favour of God and eternal life by the merit of our own good works, yet faith in *Christ*, repentance of all sin, and holiness of heart and life, are necessary, in order to our enjoyment of the final salvation.” The scripture is most express and positive in such sort of articles. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” *Mark* xvi. 16. “Except ye repent ye shall perish.” *Luke* xiii. 3, 5. And,
“without

“without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” *Heb.* xii. 14. Now by this article we are bound to resist all temptations, to strive against and subdue all sinful appetites and inclinations, and to practise all known duties of fear, faith, love, and worship, towards God; and justice, faithfulness, and kindness, toward men.

“That the holy Spirit of God is appointed and given to bless men with wisdom and spiritual understanding, to assist them to accept of this salvation of *Christ*, to sanctify them here, and fit them for the full enjoyment of it hereafter: For since the canon of scripture is completed, there is a number of such express attestations therein, to the enlightening and sanctifying operations of the holy Spirit, that he who utterly and in all senses denies them, seems to deny that there is any thing for the blessed Spirit to do amongst men, since the day of miracles was ended. Now since the gift of the Spirit is one of the most glorious and promised blessings of the gospel, a considerable part of the gospel seems to me to consist in the operations of the holy Spirit; and in this sense, he that denies the holy Spirit, seems to refuse a glorious part of the appointed salvation.

Let it be considered also, that we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and holy Spirit: And is it not necessary that we should have some general knowledge and idea who this Father, Son, and Spirit are, and what is their distinct concern and business in matters of our salvation, together with their divine all-sufficiency to perform it?

The *Ephesians*, who had never heard of a holy Ghost, and were baptized only in the baptism of *John*, might be true believers without this knowledge. *Acts* xix. 2, 3. But since we have had such abundant discoveries of him, and are baptized into his name, the case is much altered. How can we accept adult baptism, or confirm that which we passed through in infancy, at our coming into a church, if we know nothing of the holy Spirit, nor the use of him in our religion?

It might also be added, as a further argument on this head, that the communion of the holy Ghost is the great gospel-benediction, joined with the “love of God, and the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*;” as in *2 Cor.* xiii. 14. So that our initiation into christianity being solemnized in the name of Father, Son, and holy Spirit, our christian life and state being maintained by their distinct offices or transactions therein, and our hope of happiness depending on their divine benediction, we may reasonably infer, that some knowledge and faith of the blessed trinity are necessary to christian salvation.

“That there shall be a resurrection of the body is another such article; for if the dead rise not, then is not *Christ* risen; and if *Christ* be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.” *1 Cor.* xv. 16, 17. However this might be doubted by some *Corinthians* before this epistle was written, yet it cannot safely be doubted now.

“That there is a state of happiness hereafter prepared for saints where *Jesus Christ* is,” *John* xiv. 3. and those that “refuse his gospel shall be punished from the presence of the Lord with everlasting destruction.” *2 Thess.* i. 9. These seem to be necessary motives to work upon our hope and fear, and without which the gospel could hardly be supposed to be received amongst men; and therefore I count them necessary and fundamental articles of christianity.

Thus I have attempted to give some instances of such doctrines as seem to be necessary to a christian profession, according to the second character of fundamentals; viz. “such as raise it above natural religion, and distinguish it from *judaism*, &c. and are

are represented in scripture as the foundation, the substance, and the glory of the gospel."

3. A third character by which several fundamentals may be known, is this: "Those doctrines or duties that are expressly made necessary to salvation in the word of God, are certainly fundamentals:" Though the greatest part of these are such as are either necessary to all religion under the first head, or are some of the most distinguishing doctrines of the christian religion under the second head; as, "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." *Heb. xi. 6.* That *Jesus Christ* is the only way to the Father. *John xiv. 6.* "No man cometh to the Father but by me. That *Jesus* is the *Christ*: Who is a liar, but he that denieth that *Jesus* is the *Christ*? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son: Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." 1 *John ii. 22, 23.*

The duties of believing in *Christ*, mortification of sins of the flesh, and perseverance in faith and holiness, I esteem fundamental and necessary duties; because the scripture expressly saith, "he that believeth not, shall be damned." *Mark xvi. 16.* "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die." *Rom. viii. 13.* "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." *Heb. x. 38.* And for the same reason this error, that justification is to be attained by the works of the law, seems to be an heresy, or fundamental error; because the scripture saith, "*Christ* is become of none effect to you, whosoever of you will be justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." *Gal. v. 4.* By which we are to understand such a hope of justification by the law, as made the sacrifice and atonement of *Christ* needless; and which was most probably the sense of the heretics in that day.

SECTION IV. But here I desire my readers to take notice of these five things.

Note first, That I have by no means pretended to reckon up all the fundamental articles, or give a full or regular catalogue of them: There may be some which I have omitted, and some which I have mentioned twice, and that are included in each other. I have only laid down some general tokens or marks, whereby necessary truths and duties may be known, so far as the terms of christian communion are concerned therein.

Note second, I have here joined several doctrinal and practical articles together, supposing that all those duties which the scripture makes necessary to be practised, are necessary also to be known in order to practise.

Note third, I call these articles fundamental; and it is my opinion they may be insisted on as necessary to communion, because they seem to me necessary to true christianity, in such an age and land of light as our's is. Yet, what I hinted before I repeat now, that, as I will not judge all the heathen world, and condemn them for want of christian knowledge, so neither will I utterly condemn every poor soul in the obscurest corners of a christian nation, for want of such degrees of knowledge as to me seem necessary to salvation, to all that know and read the new testament. I grant, that God, in his word, does not seem to give encouragement to their hope of heaven, nor allow their communion with christians on earth: But the final condemnation of them is alone with him. And after all that we can say, every person must judge for himself, which articles are necessary in order to his own salvation; and every church must judge for itself, to regulate it's own communion; and God alone is a superior judge, with regard to the one or the other.

Note fourth, I do not think every one of these articles necessary to be expressly insisted on, and professed by every communicant; but so many only as the church shall

shall think necessary, in order to give them a reasonable satisfaction that he knows and believes the rest.

Note fifth, Though I esteem it necessary that every communicant make known his belief of such articles as the church judges fundamental and necessary some way or other, yet I am far from confining him to any proposed human forms of expression; as I shall shew under the next question.

SECTION V. I proceed now to the second sort of knowledge that is necessary to christian communion; and that is, a "knowledge of all those things that are necessarily implied in the enjoyment or practice of this communion;" or, in short, thus: We must know what communion is, and how to communicate, before we can practise this duty.

This sort of knowledge includes these particulars.

1. If I should say it is necessary to be baptized before we communicate at the Lord's table, I should have far the greatest part of christians on my side; and if baptism be necessary, it is necessary also to know the nature of baptism, the end and design of baptism, the meaning of being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, and the manner of performing it, whether it must be done by dipping or sprinkling, or whether both be not lawful, and whether baptism in infancy be sufficient.

2. It is necessary also, that a person should know what is the nature of the Lord's supper; that it is to be performed by breaking of bread, and distributing that and the wine amongst a christian assembly; that the bread and wine are both to be blessed, and what is the nature of that blessing; what the bread and wine represent; what is the design of breaking and distributing them; who are the persons that must do this: And a woman must know, whether women are to be admitted to the Lord's supper.

3. That several persons, who make a credible profession of christianity, must agree to meet together for christian worship, at the same time, and in the same place, in order to celebrate this ordinance; and that it is not to be received alone, because it is an ordinance of communion.

Without the knowledge of these things, I do not see how any person can communicate in the sacred and special ordinances of the gospel in an orderly manner, or with spiritual profit.

Thus have I endeavoured to open the way for persons to form their judgment upon this difficult and important question, what are those "articles of the christian religion, the knowledge of which is necessary to communion;" and I hope I have kept the middle way between a libertinism of principles, and a narrow uncharitable spirit: Wherein I have failed, I shall be glad to be set right in a spirit of meekness.

QUESTION

Q U E S T I O N VIII.

In what words and expressions must our faith be professed, in order to communion? And in what manner must we profess it?

SECTION I. **T**HIS has been a famous and notable question in all ages of the church. National churches, synods, assemblies or councils of bishops, presbyters, and learned men, have established certain sets of fundamental articles and express forms of confession; and by these forms persons are to be tried, that desire admission to their communion. Others, who have thought this yoke and burden imposed upon the conscience too heavy and intolerable, have maintained, that no forms of confession are necessary, besides the very words of scripture; and that he who agrees to these words, has a right to christian communion, though perhaps he may understand or explain them in a sense never so different from the church, whose communion he desires.

Now to speak my own sentiment with freedom here, I think these are two extremes; and the best medium that I can find for all the purposes of peace and truth is, that every man should confess his faith in his own words, which I shall endeavour to make evident by a particular review of each method.

I grant, that it seems a very natural and plausible argument, that since God has written down all needful christian truths and duties in the holy scripture, we can chuse no better words to confess them in, than those which God himself has given us for our instruction in those truths and duties: But if we consider the affairs of the christian world, the experience of mankind, the practice of heretics and deceivers, as well as the reason of things, we shall find that, though the words of scripture are sufficient to teach us all the necessary parts of christianity, yet the mere repetition of them, or subscription to them, cannot give sufficient proof, that the person so professing, has any understanding of them; or has any true christian knowledge. An idiot, or an idle boy, may learn twenty of the noblest and most comprehensive sentences of scripture without book: a very ignorant person, or a man of most erroneous and destructive principles may repeat any words of scripture, and profess to believe them, while the one has a quite contrary meaning under those words, and the others have no meaning at all. Now surely such sort of professions can never be counted a sufficient evidence of christian knowledge, and consequently can never give him a right to the holy communion.

But because this point is of great importance, I shall debate it at large as a distinct question by itself.

SECTION II. It will be replied then immediately, "If the words of scripture are not a sufficient test in this case, may not confessions of faith, drawn up by wise and good men, be made a test of christian knowledge?"

I answer, no, by no means; and that for these three reasons: It will admit such as ought not to be admitted, it will exclude such as ought not to be excluded, and it will endanger or infringe christian liberty.

Reason I. This may admit such persons as ought not to be admitted; for such forms of doctrine, drawn up by other men, will be liable to the same inconveniencies

that will attend any scriptural form of words: A child, or an idiot, may learn and repeat them by heart; a very ignorant person, or one who is very erroneous, may profess and subscribe them in his own sense: For when such forms have continued some time in the world, men of very heretical notions and tempers, being in danger of being excluded from the church by such a test, will contrive and find how to put some perverse sense upon the words, and thus evade the force, and disappoint the design of them, as they have done in all ages with the words of scripture.

Reason II. This may exclude such persons as ought not to be excluded: For if a person of a truly christian spirit, and of a pious and unblemished character should happen to differ from this form of human articles but in one sentence, or even in one word, he cannot honestly assent to, nor subscribe the whole form, though he is perfectly of the same mind in all things, except in that minute point; and yet for this little inconsiderable difference, he must be excluded the communion of the church, and perhaps be liable to all the immediate inconveniencies of such an exclusion, as much as if he denied every article.

There are no synods, or councils of christian bishops or presbyters, even though the laity have been mingled with them, but have put into their articles and confessions some little party notions, as well as the great and necessary truths of the gospel. They have ever had an itch to determine some questions about meats, and days, and circumstances, and ceremonies, either in faith or worship, as well as the most undoubted and fundamental points of christianity. Mint, and anise, and cummin, have been ever creeping into confessions of faith among the weightier matters of faith and love. Now if subscribing to a whole set of articles be the test of communion, then for not eating flesh or herbs, or for want of the anise and the cummin, a man is excluded the church as much as if he wanted faith and love; which is a most unreasonable thing, and would directly contradict that great canon of the apostle, *Rom. xiv. 1.* "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."

Reason III. It will endanger or infringe christian liberty. The imposition of human forms of profession has been a heavy burden and sore bondage, under which most parts of the christian church have groaned in almost in every age. It has been a sore temptation to many thousands to strain and subdue those words to new significations, to various and very foreign senses, in order to bend their consciences to a compliance with them; and it has oftentimes been made a hateful engine and instrument of quarrels and schisms, of reproaches and sharp persecutions to many sincere and honest souls, that could not warp their sincerity, nor subdue their consciences to such a compliance. Whence arises the severity of the inquisition in *Spain* and *Portugal*, and the compliances of the *Jews* there, to profess the *roman* faith? It is true, no human method is perfectly free from all inconveniencies, yet I would not willingly encourage such a method which has often had such mischievous and impious effects, and has always such danger attending it.

Yet I am very much of the mind that articles of religion, confessions, catechisms, and short summaries of the christian faith, are very useful and necessary amongst the churches of *Christ* for several reasons; and particularly,

1. "To give a short and compendious view of the chief and most necessary points of the christian religion, which lie scattered up and down in many distant places of scripture:" And for this reason, such books are very profitable for all christian families, to teach the young and the ignorant the sum and substance of what they must believe and practise in order to salvation; for though every thing necessary be plainly contained in the word of God, yet persons that have little time, and little knowledge,
and

and very weak reason, would be at a great loss to collect all their faith and duty from so large a book as the bible is, without some teacher. They would want some instructor, who might lay these things together in an easy method, or some systems, confessions, or catechisms, wherein it is done already. Though these catechisms and confessions should be examined by the word of God, so far as every person is capable, and should be no farther received than they bear a conformity thereto by all that are capable of such examination.

2. Such articles, or summaries of the christian religion, are useful “to hold forth to the world what are in general the sentiments of such a particular church, or churches:” And this is proper on many accounts, so it is of use in order to make the way to their communion evident and easy, and that other christians may know whether they agree with them in what is essential to christianity, and may judge, whether they should seek or desire constant or occasional communion with them; and that other churches may judge whether they should admit their members to communion: This also may tend to encourage more zealous and hearty consultations, and mutual assistances toward the support of their common christianity, provided that these articles are drawn up with judgment; and these things are managed with prudence and charity.

Such are, or should be, the articles of the church of *England*, which proclaim her doctrine and discipline to the world: Such are, or should be, the *Westminster* assembly’s confession of faith, or that of the *Savoy*, and the two catechisms, which shew the faith and worship of the *english* dissenters: Such are, or should be, the confessions of the foreign reformed churches; of all which it may be said in general, they are very good summaries of the christian religion, however they may differ in lesser points and circumstances. All these have been of unspeakable advantage in the churches of *Christ*, not only to train up children and families in the knowledge of divine truths, but to hold forth to all the world upon what foundations the protestant churches are built, and to declare what their faith is, and what their practice.

I would not be understood, as though I thought such confessions of faith necessary to be drawn up and kept in all churches for these ends; for many of the primitive churches for a hundred years or more, managed their affairs without any such formal confessions, at least without any so large ones, generally approved and delivered down to posterity. The constant preaching and praying in the churches, and mutual communication of christians, did notify to their fellow-christians and fellow-churches, their consent in the most necessary and important articles of faith and worship. But it is certain, that since churches are more multiplied, and errors more abundantly increased, there are many expedencies that attend such a declared and public consent, or harmony of several churches, in the same general points of doctrine and duty.

I grant that there have been some great inconveniencies attending these national confessions and articles, such as the nailing down certain degrees of reformation to everlasting imperfection, and the settling some mistakes for whole nations and future ages; we in *Great Britain* need not run far to seek for instances of this, whether we dwell in the north or south part of it.

But these inconveniencies may be avoided, if we and our fathers had but observed two things. 1. That such articles need not be drawn up in the strictest terms of any particular party, but with allowance of some just degrees of latitude for different sentiments; nor let such articles descend into a determination of too many particulars in things that are of little moment in christianity; and 2. I would have it always secured, that this precise form of words be never imposed on any person whatsoever

as

as a test of christianity, of communion, of ordination, &c. to be subscribed or acknowledged by assent or consent; at least it ought never to be done without the allowance of such limitations, explications, and exceptions which might secure the consciences of pious christians from all unnecessary bonds and fetters.

SECTION III. The only way therefore that I know of to secure the just christian liberty, both of churches and persons, is this, "That every person who proposes himself to communion must confess his faith in his own words;" or by an open and friendly conference with the ministers, officers, or deputed persons of the church, he must give them satisfaction in what sense he understands the holy scriptures, in momentous and fundamental points; and make it appear that he knows and believes all the necessary articles of christianity: And, as I said before, they must take heed not to make more articles necessary than *Christ* has done by the rule of his word, and they should acknowledge themselves satisfied with such a profession, as may be sufficient to manifest a person to be a good christian, without descending into nice particularities of opinion, and points of less importance. Whether persons of divided sentiments in lesser matters should be received to fixed or to occasional communion only, shall be discussed afterward.

Where there is any just ground of suspicion that a person holds such errors, as in the opinion of the church are exceeding dangerous, if not damnable, there surely the church has a right to require that he declare himself free from those errors, and give his sense of scripture in opposition to them, so far as to give satisfaction to the church: But he is not bound to do it in any form of words proposed to him, or imposed upon him by others: but only in words of his own choosing; because the design of their enquiry, and of his confession, is to profess his own sense of scripture, or his own faith, and not theirs: And the church must afterward judge, whether the declared sense of the proposed communicant, or candidate, agree with their sense, sufficient for communion in the special ordinances of the gospel.

Hereby the truth and extent of a man's own knowledge is much better found out, than by any form of words whatsoever, human or divine, that can be proposed to him for assent or subscription. Hereby the liberty of the person desiring communion is secured from impositions, in that he is not confined to any set of words, but has the whole range of his mother-tongue to tell what he believes, and to express his own sense of scripture. Hereby the church also has it's full liberty of judging the character and profession of the person admitted to their communion, whether he believe the words of scripture in such a sense, as the church thinks necessary to salvation, and sufficient for practising and enjoying this sacred fellowship.

This is the way to deal with others, as we would think it reasonable others should deal with us, according to the rule of our blessed Saviour. This is acting according to the professed protestant principle, not to impose on the conscience of others, but to let every one judge for himself concerning his own personal actions, and let the church judge for itself concerning it's social actions.

Thus by the influence of the blessed Spirit, which is a Spirit of truth and peace, christians may walk together by this rule, to the glory of God and their own edification; and peace and truth may be honourably maintained, so far as we are capable in this imperfect state.

SECTION IV. An enquiry may arise here, "Whether a confession of faith in writing may not serve the same purposes, as well as a conference?"

It

It is my judgment that no confessions of faith, delivered in writing, can be sufficient to give evidence of christian knowledge, except there has been some personal conference before or after the writing of this confession, whereby it may appear that the person well understands what he has written; or at least, unless there be some other very evident and convincing proofs that the person who writes it is truly sincere, and would not dare to impose upon a church, by any written confession, that which is not the real belief and sense both of head and heart.

And by this means that scandal and reproach will be taken away from the churches, of receiving members merely upon a written confession of faith and hope, which perhaps was drawn up by some other hand, and which has neither been the work of the head, nor heart of the person who desires communion.

Q U E S T I O N IX.

Where the seclusion from christian communion carries temporal inconveniencies with it, hath a particular church the power to seclude a person merely for want of orthodoxy?

SECTION. I. **S**INCE I have put the test of knowledge sufficient for christian communion upon the final judgment of the church, and their satisfaction in the orthodoxy of a communicant, it is necessary I should answer this great objection, viz. Suppose a *socinian*, a professed *pelagian*, or an *antinomian* of the grossest kind, should declare that he has been very sincere in searching the scriptures to find the truth, should he be secluded from communion, because he doth not appear in his confession orthodox enough to satisfy the church? And is it not somewhat like persecution, when being rejected by the church he shall lie under some reproach, and sustain temporal damage in his reputation among his neighbours?

Answer I. It is certain that persons who give not just evidence of true christianity, ought not to be received to the special ordinances of christian worship, and enjoy christian communion: Now those who believe not the necessary, fundamental, and essential doctrines of the christian religion cannot properly be called true christians, whatsoever general profession they may make of believing the bible, or being the disciples of *Christ*: Therefore such are not to be received.

A man may profess to be very sincere in searching the scriptures to find out truth: but of real inward sincerity, as well as inward christianity, God only is the judge; and how valuable a qualification soever sincerity may be, if it could be found in any persons in *England* who are not true christians, and how far soever it may go towards acceptance with God in the secret of his mercy, yet it is not the profession of sincerity, but of christianity, that gives a person right to the fellowship of a christian church: For God in his revealed word has not bid us receive all that are sincere, but all that believe or have received *Christ*, or all that profess to be true christians. And in this case I know no judge on earth superior to the church, with which communion is desired, and the officers thereof. These must determine whether the profession of christianity be credible, or no, as I have proved before under the second question.

Answer II.

Answer II. Those temporal inconveniencies that a man may happen to sustain among his neighbours, by being excluded from a particular church for want of true faith, are no part of that church's act in refusing him, nor a necessary consequent thereof; but only a mere occasional or accidental inconvenience, to which all human affairs are subject in this imperfect state. Now this is evident, because in a heathen nation the rejection of a person from a christian church for want of such faith would be honourable, and his neighbours would like him the better for it; though it happens in a christian nation that his neighbours may reproach him; but still this event is no part of the church's act, who ought to love him as a man, and do all due offices of kindness to him, even while they cannot receive him as a true christian.

Answer III. Though we are not to do the least hurt to any person because he doth not hold the christian faith, yet we are allowed and encouraged to love good christians better than those that are not so: We are commanded to "love our enemies, and do good to them that hate us," *Matth. v. 44.* but we are told, *Matth. x. 41, 42.* that "he that doth the least benefit to a prophet or disciple, as such, shall have a peculiar reward." We are in a special manner required to "love the brotherhood." *1 Pet. ii. 17.* "to love one another." *John xv. 12, 17.* "and to do good to all, but especially to the household of faith," *Gal. vi. 10.* Nor can the withholding that degree of love from an heathen, which belongs to a pious christian, be justly called persecution or hardship, any more than my neighbour may complain that I persecute him, because I do not love him so well as my brother or my father.

Give me leave to add in this place, that though the temporal inconvenience of shame or disreputation is not the necessary consequent of an exclusion from a church for want of faith, yet these inconveniencies may certainly and justly attend the exclusion of a person for want of good morals. And St. *Paul* plainly intimates it, *1 Cor. v. 9, 10, 11.* where he permits them to "keep company with heathen fornicators, extortioners or idolaters, and to eat with them if they are invited," chapter x. verse 27. But he forbids them to allow the same degree of civility to "a fornicator, extortioner, or idolater, who calls himself a brother, or a christian, with such a one, he says, we should keep no company, not so much as to eat with him." So in *2 Tliess. iii. 6, 11, 14.* concerning disorderly christians and busy-bodies that will not work to maintain themselves, the apostle says, "withdraw yourselves from every such brother," which may signify a withdrawal from spiritual or from civil communion with him, or perhaps include both. He forbids the *Thessalonians* to have any "company with him, that he may be ashamed;" *2 Tliess. iii. 14.* and the reason seems to be this: These practices are justly accounted shameful by the light of nature, and among the heathens; now when a man professes so holy a religion as christianity is, and yet practises these shameful vices, he is guilty of a double crime, and aggravates his iniquity; he is a hypocrite and a deceiver, as well as a vicious man, and the apostle exhorts the church to make him know and feel the shame of it.

SECTION II. Another objection a-kin to the former, seems naturally to rise here, and to want an answer too, viz. Suppose a man be a real and hearty christian, holding all the necessary articles of the christian faith, and he proposes himself to communion with a church of narrow and uncharitable principles, who make more fundamentals than *Christ* has made, shall such a man be excluded from communion, merely for want of orthodoxy in the judgement of an unskilful church?

Answer.

Answer. Without doubt it is a criminal thing in any assembly, or church of *Christ*, to imagine and create new fundamentals, and impose them upon others, or to establish narrow and uncharitable rules of communion; yet it is possible that such a church may act in the sincerity of their hearts, for the honour of *Christ*, and the purity of his ordinances; many such churches there have been in our age, and more in the age of our fathers; and though it be faulty in them to exclude true christians, yet they must still be the visible judges of the fitness of persons for their own visible communion, and they are accountable for their conduct only to *Christ*, their supreme Lord and judge.

It is better, in my opinion, therefore, that a person who is a real christian, should join himself to some other distant church, though it may be with some inconvenience; or perhaps it may be better that he should live without ordinances of special communion, which are not absolutely necessary to salvation, than that he should break the settled peace of a church, which walks with God in faith, and holiness, and comfort, though their principles of communion may be a little too narrow and uncharitable, and not to be vindicated. No man ought to come into a voluntary society, and become a member thereof, without the consent of the society, though perhaps they unjustly refuse to give their consent. They must answer it to *Christ*, their judge, at the great day. There is nothing in this world perfectly free from all inconveniencies; prudence and christianity ever direct us, of two evils, to chuse the least.

Q U E S T I O N X.

Whether a profession to believe the express words of scripture, without any explication, be an evidence of knowledge sufficient for christian communion?

SECTION I. **T**HOUGH what I have already said under the former questions, might be sufficient to answer the present enquiry, yet since in several ages of the church, and especially in times of rising error this controversy has been moved, I shall spend some time in sifting it thoroughly, and endeavour to lead my reader to such a determination of it, as may give a just satisfaction to an honest and humble enquirer.

By the express words of scripture, I here intend the words expressed in our *english* bible; or the original *greek* and *hebrew* words translated into some other *english* words; for it is evident, that the *greek* and *hebrew*, can be of no use to admit plain christians into *english* churches.

When I say without any explication, I mean, without explaining the sense of those scriptural words so translated, by other words or phrases; also without any manner of influence or consequence drawn from those words, though it lie never so plain and open. Without explication signifies, where the person proposing himself to communion assents to the words of scripture, but refuses to explain in what sense he understands those words; and neither will own or deny any other articles or propositions that may offered him as terms of communion, though deduced from the words of

scripture with never so much evidence; nor will confess his faith, even in the most important and necessary points, in any other words but those of his bible.

When I mention knowledge sufficient for christian communion, it is not to be understood, as if knowledge were the only thing necessary; for in order to christian communion, there is also required a professed subjection to all the known duties of christianity, and a conversation answerable to this profession: But the present enquiry is, whether the express words of scripture are a sufficient test of that knowledge, which is one requisite to communion.

Now let the question be proposed in the fullest and fairest manner thus. "Whether a person's professing to believe the *english* bible itself, or subscribing, assenting to, or repeating any form of words expressly taken out of any *english* translation, without any manner of explication or inference, can be an evidence of christian knowledge, sufficient to demand admission to the Lord's supper, with a christian church in *England*?"

Those that assert the affirmative in this question, are of two sorts; either persons that have entertained some sentiments in the important points of christianity different from the common faith of the churches, and would shelter those opinions under the express words of scripture, though they explain them in their own sense; or they are persons that heartily maintain the common faith, but through an unlimited excess of charity are afraid of narrowing the terms of christian communion, lest they should exclude some sincere christians out of the church; they are jealous of losing their christian liberty, and are afraid of having conscience oppressed by an imposition of any confessions of faith, or articles of communion, drawn up in the words of fallible men.

Those that hold the negative in this question are also of two sorts; either such as have a narrow and uncharitable spirit, and refuse their communion to all christians that will not assent, consent, or subscribe to every word and expression contained in their articles, confessions and human forms; or they are such as maintain a just and reasonable charity towards all that they can hope to be sincere christians, and dare not exclude any persons duly qualified from the holy communion: They would also secure christian liberty in the full extent that *Christ* has given it to his people; but they are zealous for the faith once delivered to the saints, for the purity of the gospel, for the honour of *Christ* in his churches, and the true profit and pleasure of christian communion in holy ordinances; nor would they willingly indulge such an excessive complaisance instead of charity, and such a licentious freedom of opinions in their community, as would tend to the destruction of all that is valuable in the communion of the churches of *Christ*.

I must confess myself at present to stand on the negative side, and I hope I may rank myself among the latter sort of them. I cannot yet persuade myself that a mere assent to the words of scripture, without any explication, is a sufficient rule by which churches should judge of their communicants knowledge; and the reasons that influence and constrain me to be of this mind, I shall lay down at large in the following sections; yet I shall endeavour to shew in the end of my discourse, how a just liberty may be secured, both to single christians and to churches, and the sacred bonds of charity maintained, without a licentious indulgence of all sort of heresies and errors in the same church.

SECTION II. The first argument against the confinement of churches, to express words of scripture in judging of the knowledge of their communicants, is this, "that

“ that the greatest and best end that has ever been aimed at in this method, can never be attained by it. ” The greatest and best design of it is to secure christians from all imposition of human forms, and from making confessions of faith drawn up in the words of fallible men, a test of knowledge in the things of God : But this method is no effectual security ; for since the inspired words of *greek* and *hebrew* can be no test of knowledge in *english* churches, a confession must be made in words of *english* : Now all *english* words, into which the scripture is, or may be translated, are the words of fallible men ; and no person can be infallibly sure in some difficult and controverted texts, that they do fully and truly express the sense of the sacred originals.

I grant here that for private christians to search their *english* bibles, and find the matters of their salvation, there is abundantly sufficient certainty of the truth of every translation in general, that it clearly declares all that is of such importance : Because whatsoever is necessary to salvation, is sufficiently contained and revealed, not in one or two, but in various texts of scripture, though perhaps not always in express words ; and in most of these texts learned men generally agree about the mere translation of them : This need create no manner of scruple to sincere and humble christians in their own knowledge faith and practice. The *english* bible is gloriously sufficient for the salvation of every humble christian in *England*. The *english* gospel has saved many thousands, without any skill or knowledge of other languages.

But in this controverted case, when men assert that a confession of express words of scripture shall be sufficient to purge any man from the charge of heresy, or give him a right to demand christian communion, even where his opinions are justly suspected, I must take notice here that some of these controverted and difficult texts may naturally come into question ; such as those which seem to favour any heresies, and those which seem to guard against them. Now in such a case as this, the mere translating of the words oftentimes determines the sense of them : the translation of such a text is a sort of interpretation of the meaning of it ; and then, what translation of any particular text, shall be the standard of orthodoxy for all our churches ? Shall that which is public and established by the magistrate have this honour ? But who gave it this authority over all the churches ? Man or God ? Shall any private translation of learned and pious men met in council, determine the sense for all communions ? But whence had they this power ? Much less can the translation of any single person be a public standard.

Wandering over all nations and churches, and surveying all the various pretences to such a power, I cannot find where to fix the sole of my foot, but on the only protestant principle, viz. “ That as each person with regard to his own conduct in sacred things, must judge of the sense of scripture for himself, using the best helps of translators and expositors that he can obtain ; so each community using the same helps, must judge for themselves of the sense of the word of God, with regard to their conduct in admitting persons to partake of sacred ordinances among them. ” Therefore that particular church whose communion is desired, must determine whether any human words, in which a person's faith is confessed, are orthodox in their sense, or no ; whether they do truly answer the end of such a confession, or no ; and include the necessary articles of the christian faith ; and whether they give sufficient evidence of a man's knowledge in christianity, in order to admit him to their communion.

Suppose a modern *socinian*, or a more orthodox man, should refuse the common *english* translation of the first chapter of *x. John's* gospel, and confess his faith in

words of his own translation thus. "In the beginning was reason, and reason was with God, and reason was God:" Suppose an *athanasian* refuses the *english* translation of *Rev. iii. 14.* where *Christ* is called "the beginning of the creation of God," and says, ἀρχὴ ought to be translated the "head of God's creation," lest *Christ* be represented as a creature, and he will put this text into his confession of faith. Suppose an *arian*, an *antinomian*, an *anthropomorphite*, a *pelagian*, a *calvinist*, each confess their faith in the words of scripture of their own translation; none of these *english* words, are in the strictest and properest sense, the words of God, but the words of fallible men; and the particular church whose communion is sought must necessarily interpose with their own sense of scripture, according to the best advantages they have: They must interpose, I say, so far as to judge, whether any of these persons have so interpreted those controverted texts, in which each chuses to confess his faith, as to express aright what they believe to be the necessary articles of christianity; and though there be no necessity, that a church and it's members should agree in the sense of every text, yet there must be finally such a sense of some scriptures, given or assented to by the person desiring communion, as may satisfy that church that he has knowledge sufficient for it. Now this may be done without an imposition of any set human forms of words, as I have shewn before.

SECTION III. My second argument is this.

To make a mere confession of express words of scripture a sufficient test of knowledge to demand christian communion, denies that liberty to some christians, which it indulges to others; nay, it denies the same liberty to a whole community of christians, or to their ministers, which it indulges to each catechumen, or to every single person that offers himself to their communion. I make it appear thus.

Each single person that offers himself to communion with a particular church, has liberty given him by this rule, to put his own sense on the commands of *Christ* in demanding of communion; but the ministers or members of this church, are not allowed this liberty to put their own sense on the commands of *Christ* about receiving him. Perhaps they know by discourse and conversation, that this person denies some articles of the christian faith which they think necessary, while he confesses the words of scripture, and abuses them to a pernicious sense; yet he has liberty to impose himself on their communion, because he thinks he is fit for it in his own sense of scripture; but they cannot, according to this rule reject him, though in their sense of scripture they think him unfit.

According to his own interpretation of the bible, he says, he owns all the fundamental articles: According to their interpretation, they say, he denies some of them; yet this test opens the door of admission to him, whensoever he demands entrance, and does not permit them to shut it.

They believe the scripture forbids them to receive such to christian fellowship, who have not received the christian faith, yet this rule allows them not to forbid him their fellowship, though they think he denies the faith in some necessary parts of it. They think, according to their sense of the word of God, that he has no appearing right to the kingdom of heaven, and consequently that he has no right to enter into the church or kingdom of *Christ* on earth; but according to this rule they are bound to admit him, even contrary to their own sentiments and consciences. He has liberty to demand, but they have none to refuse.

This seems to me like a restraint of the liberty of a multitude of professed christians, to secure or indulge the liberty of a catechumen, which is far from impartial justice,

justice, in the very nature of things. Now certainly *Christ* would never impose such a rule of communion on his churches, which should not be reconcileable to common justice, and to that great and general rule of his, "Do to others as you would have others do to you."

SECTION IV. My third argument is this: That a child, an idiot, or a very ignorant man, may repeat any short form of confession, drawn up in the express words of scripture, and say, he believes it; or he may subscribe or assent to any longer form, even the whole bible itself: But surely a child, an idiot, or an ignorant person who have not a real knowledge and understanding of the things of christianity, are not fit to be received into a christian church, nor admitted to the Lord's supper. There is no formal repetition of a few words by memory, can give any proof of christian knowledge in the heart; no assent or subscription to a book, as big as the bible, can make it evident that a man understands five lines of it: Yet if this be the proper test, such ignorant creatures must be received to the noblest and highest ordinance of *Christ* upon earth.

Suppose a poor wretch that wants bread, and knows almost nothing of christianity, hears that such a congregation maintain their poor well, and in order to secure a good maintenance, he gets a few scripture-expressions on the most important points without book; his life has been obscure, unknown, and, so far as appears, not any way scandalous; he proposes himself to communion with this church, he repeats the creed, or, if he be desired to make a larger confession, he takes up his bible and says, "I believe every word that is contained between these two leathern covers to be true; and I resolve to live according to it." This poor wretch may demand admission according to such principles.

If you say, there must be some enquiry made, whether he understands the words of scripture, or no, then there must be some determined sense put upon those words of scripture as proposed by the church, or as assented to by the communicant; and thereby you depart from your pretended rule, that the express words of scripture are a sufficient test of knowledge.

I grant, that after the utmost search and enquiry into christian profession, and piety of conversation, some hypocrites will creep into the best-ordered and purest churches; human affairs are so constituted: We cannot know the hearts of men: Tares and wheat must grow together till harvest: But it is sufficiently plain in scripture, that they ought not to admit those to christian communion, who understand not the first principles of christianity; and therefore we ought to seek some satisfactory evidence of a thing that may so easily be found, viz. christian knowledge, and not bind ourselves to such a rule of admission as can give no evidence, whether a communicant has christian knowledge, or no.

I might add under this argument also, that as a child, an idiot, or a person ignorant, or a heathen may claim communion according to this rule; so a child or a heathen is a sufficient judge who has knowledge enough to be admitted to the fellowship of a church of *Christ*; for a child, or a heathen, can tell whether the person proposing himself, subscribes his bible, or no; whether he declares his general assent to all the scripture, or no; or whether he repeats any express words of scripture aright, or no. As there is no need of any real understanding in communicants upon this principle, so there is no need of any judgment or prudence in the churches of *Christ*, in order to receive them: No need of elders or governors, men of wisdom and discretion to use the keys of the church, where the door is so wide, that half the children

dren in a parish may go into the church at once ; and it opens so easily, that a child or a fool can manage it.

SECTION V. A fourth argument against this test of communion is this. If a mere assent to the express words of scripture be a sufficient test of christian knowledge to claim admission into a church, this opens the door for an endless variety of different and contrary opinions, and practices, to enter into the same church ; multitudes of heresies, that relate both to faith and practice, may swarm in the same communion ; truths and errors, fundamental, and not fundamental, will be mingled here ; errors tolerable, and intolerable ; extremely dangerous, if not damnable and destructive, will be admitted : For all that profess them in our age and day, in protestant nations, will subscribe to the bible as the sufficient rule of faith and practice ; nay, all persons that are not heathens, deists, *Jews* or *mahometans*, may claim a place in the churches of *Christ*.

Now let us first recount some of those various doctrines that will hereby be encouraged in the same communion, and then consider what will be the inconveniencies attending such a mixed community.

First, Let us recount the various doctrines and their professors, that will be encouraged in the same communion by this rule.

1. The *anthropomorphites* say, that God hath proper parts, hands and feet, and eyes, and ears, and is really in the shape of a man, according to the express words of scripture taken in a plain literal sense. One of this opinion, as I am informed, lately proposed himself to christian communion.
2. The *allegorists* on the other hand, explain in a metaphorical and figurative sense, whatsoever expressions they find in scripture, whose literal sense does not agree with their notions. Upon this principle some that deny the proper sacrifice and satisfaction of *Christ* say, that his atonement, redemption and sacrifice, are but figurative expressions. Others believe salvation to be obtained only through *Jesus Christ*, but they mean *Christ*, or the light within them.
3. The *arians* say, that *Jesus Christ* was a mere creature, made out of nothing, before all other creatures, and superior to angels, endued with divine power, and called God, and that he assumed flesh without a human soul.
4. The *fabellians* believe, that the blessed trinity, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, doth by no means intend three proper distinct persons, but is a mere trinity of names and manifestations, modes and relations in the godhead or divine nature, and that the Son of God was not properly a person before his incarnation.
5. The *socinians* derived from the old *samosatenians* and *photinians* say, that there is no such trinity of persons in the divine nature, as the *athanasians*, and the schoolmen maintain. That *Jesus Christ* is a mere man, and had no being before he was conceived of the blessed virgin. That *Christ* did not make any proper satisfaction for the sins of men. That the soul sleeps with the body, and rises with it at the resurrection ; and after all, they acknowledge that the light of nature is sufficient to direct men to eternal happiness, and that nothing is to be believed in the sublimest points of religion, but what is to be understood and judged of by our reason.
6. *Entbusasts*, on the other hand, believe that reason is of no use in things of religion. That human learning doth more hurt than good among christians. That there is no need at all of it for ministers of the gospel. That our own labour for our salvation signifies nothing, and therefore they wait for sensible impressions of the holy spirit, to move them to the common duties of christianity.

7. The

7. The *pelagians* say, that there is no imputed or inherent original sin. That man after his fall, had a proper power and free will in himself to become truly pious, or grossly wicked; and to do either good or evil. That men may obtain the favour of God by the merit of their own good works.

8. *Arminians*, or *remonstrants*, generally hold, that there is no certain and absolute election or redemption of particular persons unto salvation, that there is no need of the almighty, sovereign, and efficacious influences of the Spirit, in order to conversion. That believers may fall and perish eternally; and that there is no certain perseverance of the saints.

9. The *antinomians* hold, that all true believers were justified from eternity. That an elect person is never chargeable with sin before God. That the moral law of God is not of perpetual obligation to the consciences of believers. That sin can do a believer no real injury.

10. The strict *calvinists* deny every single proposition, and peculiar sentiment, that I have here mentioned under all the foregoing heads, and call them all errors; and believe the contrary propositions to be divine truths delivered in the scriptures.

I might here add a variety of doctrines and sects, that have in former ages troubled and divided the church, viz. the *eutychians*, who supposed that the two natures of *Christ* were so united and blended together, that the human was lost in the divine. The *apollinarians*, who taught that *Christ* brought his flesh from heaven, and that he had no human will, but only a divine will. The *donatists*, who required the true church to be without sin or spot. The *origenists*, who deny the eternal punishment of sinners, and fancy the devils themselves shall at last be saved.

I might further reckon up a long train of wild and unaccountable opinions which have no settled name, yet all arise from various senses, that the lusts, or the fancies, or humours, or mistakes of men, have put on the express words of scripture: But these are sufficient in this place.

I would not be understood here to intend that every person, to whom any of these names may be affixed by men, believes or professes all the doctrines that are ranged under any of these heads: All that I mean by this catalogue is this, that under these several names in our general and common discourse, all these principles or propositions are usually comprehended and understood.

Note, I have not mentioned the papists, because they allow not the bible to be a perfect rule, but build part of their religion on human traditions, and the pretended infallible authority of their church.

But so many of all those sects of christians that I have mentioned, as are found in our day, do all take the bible for their perfect rule of faith and practice, and each of them will subscribe the whole bible, at least in their own translation of it, and profess to believe all the express words of scripture: Now if any confession of express words of scripture, be a sufficient test of christian faith, all these persons have this qualification, and cannot be denied christian communion in any church to which they propose themselves, for want of true christian knowledge.

And now I would ask, what a wretched sort of communion is it, that could be maintained in such a church, of such widely different opinions? What fellowship could they have in hearing the same sermons, in joining in the same prayers, and in all sacred offices? What holy harmony, what order, what peace or christian unity, can be carried on in such a mixed and disagreeing multitude? But I insist no longer on this at present.

SECTION VI. In the prosecution of the fourth argument, I come therefore in the next place to consider, what will be the inconveniencies of making such a large and wide door to the church, and of encouraging such a promiscuous communion: For though all these can never walk and worship together in any peace or order, yet all may be admitted on this foundation.

One great inconvenience is this, viz. Some persons that deny necessary fundamental truths and duties, without which a man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, may enter into a church on earth, and claim christian communion by this rule of admission: For it may perhaps be doubted, whether all necessary particular articles, as well as general ones, are found in express words in the bible, which I shall afterwards have occasion to enquire into. But if all necessary articles were found there expressly, yet the grossest heretics may consent to those expressions, and explain them only in a metaphorical sense: So the *Jocinians* explain the expressions of scripture concerning the sacrifice and atonement of *Christ*, and make them all mere metaphors, to signify something of a much inferior nature: But be their explications, and their sense of scripture what it will, yet they may demand christian communion upon this principle, that they subscribe the bible, and every expression in it; though they explain the fundamental and essential articles of it quite away by figures and metaphors.

Indeed this has been the practice of heretics in all ages to run to this refuge, and make the words of scripture their hiding place and defence; having learned well from their subtle teachers, or their own cunning devices, to twist and turn the words of scripture by figures, and tropes, and distinctions, into their own pernicious sense; and this ever will be the practice of persons, grossly erroneous in the things of religion, that yet would appear to agree with the scripture, and hold the christian faith.

They may tell you that *Christ* is their only hope of salvation, and their way to God the Father; but they mean a *Christ* within, or the remains of the light of reason, and the dictates of a natural conscience.

They may assure you, they believe the resurrection of *Christ* from the dead; but they mean nothing but *Christ* within them, in the rising or awaking of the conscience from stupid inactive silence.

They may assent that *Christ* is God, but mean only a metaphorical God, because he is make a king, or governor of the church.

They may profess the whole scripture in their own sense, and in the mean time they may believe such contradictions as these, viz.

I believe; "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," *Ephes. i. 11.* Yet I believe, that the decrees of God are nothing else but immutable fate, and the necessary connexion of second causes, as Mr. *Hobbs*.

I believe that "God knoweth all his works from the beginning," *Acts xv. 18.* Yet I believe, this foreknowledge is nothing else but a perfect sagacity of mind, and immediate contrivance to turn all things that happen to fulfil his own designs, as effectually as if he really foreknew. So a much better man than Mr. *Hobbs* has explained it.

I believe, that "in the beginning was the word, and the word was God," *John i. 1.* Yet I believe that *Jesus Christ* had no being before he was conceived, and born of the virgin, and that truly and properly he is but a mere man.

I believe, that we must "flee fornication," *1 Cor. vi. 18.* but I believe, that nothing else is intended in all such texts but spiritual fornication, which is idolatry.

I believe, that we must "keep ourselves from idols," and not practise idolatry, 1 *John* v. 21. Yet I believe that we may worship the true God, by idols or images; for the idolatry which is forbidden in the scripture, signifies only the worship of stones, and stocks, and images, for real and true gods.

I believe we are bound to "follow peace with all men." *Heb.* xii. 14. yet I believe we may contend for the faith so earnestly, as to burn heretics.

I believe we must "follow holiness too, without which no man shall see the Lord." *Heb.* xii. 14. yet I am persuaded sin can do no real hurt to a believer.

Now who is there that has any value for the honour of the gospel, for the glory of *Christ*, for the purity of our religion, and the welfare of the church, that would establish such a test of communion, by which all these sort of persons may claim admission? A church composed of such a variety of sects, that differ so widely in points so numerous and so important, would much more resemble the ark of *Noah*, with all manner of creatures in it, clean and unclean, than the fold of *Christ*, where none but his sheep should have admittance, or such as have the visible marks of his sheep upon them.

The other incongruities, inconveniencies, and mischiefs that will necessarily attend a church, founded upon this test of admission, shall be more largely and particularly described in my answer to the next question, to which I refer the reader.

Perhaps it will be said by way of reply to all these arguments, that "where any person professes his faith in the mere words of scripture, and yet makes it appear that he understands them in such an erroneous sense, as is inconsistent with the gospel of *Christ*, or the fundamentals of christianity, such a person ought not to be admitted to christian communion, because he plainly overthrows by his explication, what he asserts by his confession: But where he gives no explication at all, it should be presumed that he believes all necessary truth." To this I answer,

Answer I. That if a confession of faith, in the mere words of scripture, be a sufficient test for church-fellowship, no man who professes those words ought to be excluded, let him explain them how he please; for if the rule of scripture does indeed require you to receive all that profess the faith in scriptural words, no particular and perverse explications whatsoever should break in upon this sacred rule, lest hereby, you who exclude him, set yourself up as a judge of the sense of scripture for other folks, and instead of making the words of scripture your test, you make your own sense of it the test of communion, which is the very thing you pretend to avoid, and which you profess to renounce.

Answer II. I add further, if you allow that a perverse or antichristian exposition of scripture in fundamental points, may exclude a man who professes the words of scripture from the communion, then a just and reasonable suspicion of any person's antichristian exposition of it, may give just ground for enquiry into his sense of it, before he be received to a christian church; even as a just and reasonable suspicion of any man's immorality, gives just ground for a stricter enquiry into his morals; for if he hath not christian faith, he is no more fit for the christian communion, than one who hath not christian practice.

Now suppose a person be a mere stranger to you in his moral life, you ought to make enquiry concerning his morality before you receive him, and not take his virtue for granted: And by the same reason, if he be a mere stranger to you in his faith, you ought to make the same enquiry concerning his sense of scripture, in order to know that he is not an heretic, or that he does not profess scriptural words in an heretical

tical sense; and not always take it for granted, that he believes the scripture in it's true sense.

Thus these two parts of the test of communion, viz. profession of the true faith, and a pious practice, will stand upon the same foot; and a man may be excluded even by your own concession, if he wants either of them, even though he professes the words of scripture. And there ought to be an explicit discovery of both these by the candidate in order to christian communion, and not merely an implicit belief of them in those who are appointed to examine him.

As I grant with you, that where a person has in general a fair moral character among those who know him, we ought not to take up and indulge groundless and unreasonable suspicions of his virtue; so where a person, who appears to be sincere and pious, makes profession of his faith in more general language, we ought not to take up unreasonable and groundless suspicions that he is an heretic. But as in times of universal and spreading corruption of manners, there should be a more strict enquiry into the conversation of every communicant, so in times of spreading error, where scripture words are frequently used in an heretical sense, there ought to be a more strict enquiry into his faith; and it is a very reasonable demand, that he should explain his particular sense of the general words of scripture in fundamental points, and tell what he means by them, that he may not cover gross heresies and antichristian opinions, under the confession and disguise of scriptural language, that so antichristians may not be received into a christian church.

SECTION VII. The last argument I shall propose against making a confession of the express words of scripture a sufficient evidence of christian knowledge is this, that the scripture itself does not directly, and in express words, contain all that knowledge of particular truths and duties that is necessary to christian communion. I say of particular truths and duties, for I own it contains all in generals.

Under the seventh question, I have made it appear evidently, that the knowledge necessary to christian communion, includes in it, both a knowledge of all those things that are necessary to salvation, and a knowledge of all those things that are necessary to practice, and enjoy this communion.

Now if we first survey all those truths and duties that are necessary to salvation, perhaps we might find particular articles, either of faith or practice, that are not set down in most express language in the very words of scripture. I grant, they are all so expressed in general terms, that a mean understanding, and a slight and easy turn of thought, is sufficient to derive from scripture all the particulars that are necessary to salvation; every needful explication, or consequence, lies plain and open to the view of common reason, though it may not be directly expressed in the very letter of scripture.

But I chuse rather to survey those things that are necessary to practice, and to enjoy christian communion; such knowledge as is needful, in order to partake of the Lord's supper in a regular manner in the christian church: And these things are not all contained in express words of scripture, but require something of explication and consequence to make them appear. As for instance.

1. If baptism be necessary before the Lord's supper, it is necessary also to know the nature and design of baptism, the meaning of being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit; and the manner of performing it, whether it must be done by dipping or sprinkling, or whether both be not lawful; and whether baptism in infancy be sufficient. Now all these are not written down in express words of scripture.

2. It

2. It is necessary also that a person should know what is the nature of the Lord's supper; what the bread and wine represent; what is the design of blessing, breaking, and distributing them; who are the persons that must do this: And a woman must know, whether women are to be admitted to the Lord's supper; all which things are not fully and expressly delivered in the very words of scripture.

3. That several persons, who make a credible profession of christianity, must agree to meet together, in order to celebrate christian worship, and partake of this ordinance; and that it is not to be received alone, because it is an ordinance of communion.

I might instance in other things that are necessary attendants on these ordinances, considered as human actions, which the light of nature plainly dictates, and which may be drawn by the most obvious and natural consequences from the directions, or examples of scripture; but they are not found there in express words, nor indeed is there any need of it, since they lie so open to the weakest exercise of reason.

Now to sum up the last argument. If there be any articles of christian belief, or practice, necessary to salvation, or to public christian worship, and to a regular participation of the Lord's supper, which are not laid down and described in the express words of scripture, then may we not conclude, that a mere declaration of the belief of the bible, or any part of it, is not a certain evidence of knowledge sufficient to demand christian communion, where all explications and consequences are utterly refused?

SECTION VIII. The great objection against all my discourse is this; that "since the word of God is a sufficient and perfect rule to direct christians in their faith and practice, the words of scripture are therefore a sufficient and perfect test of christian knowledge." The scripture, say they, is certainly capable of itself to determine all our doctrines, and all our duties; it is sufficient to furnish the man of God perfectly unto all good works, and it is able to make every man wise unto salvation. It was given for this end by the inspiration of God; and it does not stand in need of the assistance of human inferences and explications, in things necessary for christians to believe and practise. *2 Tim. iii. 15,—17.* Therefore an acknowledgement of the scripture, or the most considerable articles of christianity in the express words of it, is a sufficient test for christian communion.

This argument is very popular, and drawn out into much flowery eloquence, to persuade and captivate the unwary. The writers on this side of the question brighten and flash upon the reader, and, as it were, overwhelm him, if the eye of his judgment be weak, with such dazzling language as this. "What are not the words, which God himself hath written, effectually for all the purposes of christianity, without the addition of the words of men? Is not God wiser than man? And can any man form for himself a better test of knowledge, than God has done? Did not *Christ*, and his Spirit, which spoke by the apostles, know how to express divine truths in the best manner, and in words fittest for every use and service of the christian church? Has our Lord *Jesus Christ* so little consulted the truth and security of his gospel, as well as the peace and welfare of his churches, as not to express every matter necessary to communion, in plain language? Can we, shall we, dare we indulge so unbecoming an opinion of the care of our blessed Lord? Can there be any other words necessary to express his doctrine by, than those which himself has chosen?" Thus the torrent of such a popular harangue drowns all distinctions of things, and carries away the assent before due consideration.

To all this flourish, I answer first by way of concession ; that our blessed Lord is all-wise, and has the tenderest care of his church, in providing a sufficiency of helps for every occasion. The holy scripture is complete, and sufficient of itself to teach us all things necessary ; and the instructions of it are clear, plain and evident to every humble inquirer : There is no need of any additions of men to this perfect rule, nor are any words that men can invent fitter to express those doctrines and duties, more suitably to the occasion and purpose for which each part of scripture was written, I am abundantly perswaded, that from the book of God every plain christian may easily collect his own duty in the necessary affairs of his salvation, and every man may obtain knowledge enough to fit him for the communion of a christian church.

SECTION IX. But to give a full and direct answer to the force of the foregoing objection, I would lay down these considerations, which may help to remove those glaring rays of rhetoric that diffuse themselves round the argument, impose upon, and dazzle weaker minds, and prevent them from beholding the question in it's true light, which, if once seen in it's proper sense, would be determined with much ease.

Consideration I. It is generally agreed by protestant writers, that not the mere words of scripture, but the sense of it is properly scripture. The words are but the shell in which the divine ideas are conveyed to the mind. It is not the words of the bible, but the sense of it, which has the proper characters of the word of God. If any words or language might pretend to this, surely it must be the *hebrew* and *greek* originals : Now these have no such power upon an unlearned *dane*, or *swede*, a *french* or an *english* man, as is attributed in scripture to the word of God. These words in *greek* would not pierce or divide in sunder the soul and spirit of a barbarian : The gospel in mixed *syriac* language, in which *Christ* himself spoke, would never prove the power of God to the salvation of a *roman*, or a *turk* : Nor could the perfect law of the Lord, in *hebrew*, convert the soul of a *muscovite*. But when these original words are translated into each language, and convey the same divine instruction and sense to different nations ; this sense and instruction, which is properly the word of God, work upon the heart, and make a new creature ; for the sense of scripture is the same in all languages, though the words are very different. Hence it is plain, that we do not in the least derogate from the honour of the bible, while we declare, that it is the sense of scripture, and not the mere words of it, that must be our rule of duty and practice.

Consideration II. That the mere words of scripture were never given us for a test of truth and error, but the sense of scripture is such a test ; much less can we suppose the words of scripture given us for a test of every man's knowledge, in order to christian communion. Those that are of this opinion, profess indeed to pay a most exalted and superlative honour to the holy scripture, in making the very letters and syllables of it so effectual and powerful, to determine all controversies in the christian church with the greatest ease, and to charm and subdue the warring tongues of men to submission and silence : For if an heretic acknowledges these letters and syllables to be divine, no man must open his mouth against him. But surely this is such a honour, as God never designed for letters and syllables ; and if I might venture to use so hard a word, I should ask whether it were not a superstitious regard paid to ink and paper ? When errors are proposed, we are indeed called to examine them by "the law and the testimony, *Isai.* viii. 20. and it is said, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." But the design of this text is not

to make the very words and syllables the judges of truth, but the meaning and sense of them: I prove it thus.

Suppose I doubt whether *Christ* "made a real and proper satisfaction to the justice of God for the offences of man;" I compare this with the words of scripture, and I find there, that *Christ* "redeemed us from the curse, he bare our sins on his body, he was made a sacrifice for sin, he is our propitiation, or atonement;" but I cannot find the words real and proper satisfaction in scripture; how then must I judge whether this be truth, or no? I cannot do it by the mere words, for these are different; but by it's agreement in sense and meaning with those other scriptural expressions, I find it to be a divine truth.

I prove it by another instance thus. Suppose I am told, that I must "subdue my pride and vanity of mind, and that I must repent of all backbiting and intemperance, of which I have been guilty, if ever I would be saved:" I consult my bible, and there I find that I "must repent of sin, that I must mortify the deeds of the body, that I must crucify the flesh with it's lusts, that I must pluck out my right eye, and cut off my right hand, if I would enter into the kingdom of heaven." Now how shall I know what is my duty? Surely, the literal sense of the words cannot be. How then shall I find my duty, but by explaining the spiritual sense of these metaphors, in which scripture so much abounds? A right hand, and a right eye, signifies those sins which are beloved as those members of the body; and then I must draw such consequences as these, viz. "If sin must be repented of, then backbiting and intemperance must be repented of, for they are sins; and pride and vanity of mind must be subdued for the same reason."

If the words of scripture may not be treated in this manner, and applied to solve any doubt or difficulty by explications and inferences, the scripture cannot be a sufficient test of truth and error; and if this method be allowed, then it becomes also a sufficient test of christian knowledge in order to communion; which is all that I contend for.

Consideration III. Most of the books of scripture were written at different times, and upon very different occasions, to reprove some particular vices, to refute some special errors or heresies, to instruct in some particular affairs relating to doctrine and duty, in such expressions as were most exactly suited, and divinely proper to answer those special designs. The metaphors and figures of speech there used were well known, or well explained in that age, and accommodated to the genius and understanding of those persons, for whose benefit they were first written: And by these divine writings we have sufficient direction to find out all necessary truths and duties at all times, in all nations, and ages of the church, by comparison of things, and just inferences. Now though God foreknew what errors would arise in every age, yet it is impossible that so small a book as the new testament, could mention and refute every error that might possibly arise, or forbid every particular vice or corruption that might spring up in following ages; and all this in express words, and in terms most directly opposing those sins and errors which are almost infinite, and as yet had no being. Therefore without any derogation from the sufficiency of scripture, we may justly allow, that it is possible for wise and pious men, that live in those succeeding ages, to explain the general sense of scripture in such expressions, as may more directly and effectually guard against the sins and heresies of the age; this is certainly needful in order to instruct the ignorant; and some confession of this kind may be proper and necessary in times of error, to keep the communion of the churches of *Christ* pure and holy; yet this also may be done, as I have shewn before,

before, without an express imposition of any set human forms; but it can never be done effectually by making the mere words of scripture a test of communion, which in all ages heretics have learned to pervert to their own sense.

Consideration IV. The sufficiency of scripture, for our rule of faith and practice in revealed religion, does not signify a sufficiency of the bare words and syllables of scripture, to declare every particular article of doctrine or duty in direct and express terms: But that it sufficiently includes and contains them all; so that by a most easy and obvious exercise of reason, all necessary truths and duties may be found, either in express words, or in easy, plain and natural consequences; and that there is no need of old traditions, nor any new inventions of men. The sufficiency of natural light, to direct innocent man in natural religion, does not signify that all the general and particular articles of it were written actually, and constantly abiding in the mind, but that they are plainly and easily deducible by natural reason. So a book is said to be sufficient to teach any art or science, if it contains all the main principles of it, so that all the parts of this art or science, may be very easily learned thereby.

The new testament is sufficient to teach us the holy skill of prayer, because it includes every thing necessary for that duty; and the Lord's prayer has been generally esteemed a perfect model for that part of worship; yet a child may say over all the words of the Lord's prayer, and know not at all how to pray: And if it were possible for a strong memory to repeat all the new testament by heart, it would not be a sufficient proof, that that person was acquainted with the divine skill of praying. So the bible is abundantly sufficient to furnish a preacher for his work; but if he could say never so many of the words of the bible without book, it would not be a proper test of his ability to preach. This spiritual furniture and skill for the performance of praying or preaching, is to be obtained by comparing several parts of the bible together, by learning their sense and meaning, and by drawing proper inferences from several passages of it, and knowing how to apply them to all particular cases in sermons and prayers: The same may be said in proportion concerning the furniture and fitness of a person to be admitted to christian communion. Now in order for a man to manifest that he has this spiritual skill and furniture, he must acquaint me in some other words, what he means by these words of scripture that he can repeat by memory.

It is not at all inconsistent with the clearness and perfection of scripture, that the unlearned should use their reason in finding out doctrines and duties, by comparing scripture with scripture, and drawing general inferences from the practice, example and occasional speeches of *Christ* and his apostles; as it has never been counted inconsistent with the clearness and perfection of it, that learned men must translate the *greek* and *hebrew* into our mother-tongue: For the bible in *greek* and *hebrew*, is more insufficient to lead a poor *english* man to heaven without translation, than an *english* bible is to lead him thither, without the exercise of his reason in explications and inferences.

The plain and natural consequences of scripture, have in a larger sense been often called scripture itself; and have always been justly allowed as sufficient to determine any controversy in religion, or prove any truth, or refute any error. The example of *Christ* and his apostles, shew us the use and the necessity of consequences; they argued in this manner against their opponents, who did not acknowledge their divine commission. *Chillingworth* himself, in that famous paragraph of his which is so often cited, acknowledges that plain inferences from scripture make up part of our religion: The bible, saith he with emphasis, "The bible is the religion of protestants; whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain irrefragable indubitable consequences

quences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion, but not as a matter of faith and religion."

Nor is it necessary to the plainness, evidence and strength of any consequences of scripture, that all persons should own them, and none deny them; for the plainest and most open truths have been denied by some persons in all ages, through want of attention, through false education, through the prepossession of other opinions, through the attachment to a party, through obstinacy of temper, and blind zeal: But all the consequences of scripture, that are necessary to faith and practice in order to salvation, are so plain, that a honest, sincere and diligent person, though weak in understanding, may easily find them out by reading, meditation, humble prayer, and readiness to receive the truth in the love of it.

Here let it be noted, that the necessary consequences of scripture, may be called the doctrine of scripture; though the consequences of the doctrines of *Luther*, *Calvin*, or any other man, may not be called their doctrines; because the Spirit of God, who searcheth the deep things of God, well knew all the propositions and consequences that ever could be drawn, and fairly deduced from the words of scripture, when he first inspired the sacred writers; and therefore he designed them all as certain and divine truths. But it is not so with men, who may hold such opinions as are attended with unhappy consequences, which yet they themselves may not be aware of, or perhaps may expressly deny.

Consideration V. The most perfect rule always needs a proper application to every particular case; and this does not at all diminish it's perfection, nor lessen it's perspicuity. Scripture is still the perfect and final judge of truth and duty in things sacred, though every man must apply the words and sense of scripture to his own case, for his own instruction, edification, and salvation; and every church for their own practice of communion, must apply the words of scripture according to their own best judgment. The law is a perfect judge of right and wrong in things civil, though it must be applied, by the reason and wisdom of man, to particular cases. A rule, or square, is not imperfect because it requires the hand of the builder to apply it, in order to measure the house, or the wall. We are not brutes that cannot reason, nor mere white paper, fit to take nothing but the express stamp of letters and syllables; reasoning is one of our noblest powers, and God demands it's exercise: We are bid to search the scriptures, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. It is impossible to transfer, or apply, any general sentence of scripture to particular exhortations, reproofs, instruction, conviction, or comfort for ourselves or others, without deducing consequences, and thereby bringing the general words to our daily present occasions: Nor is it possible for any persons to be admitted into a church of *Christ*, upon just and regular grounds, without comparing their personal characters, their confessions, and their practice with the word of God, by the exercise of our reason, and applying to that particular case, what we derive and infer from general rules, or parallel examples; now all this cannot be done without making use of the consequences of scripture.

Consideration VI. This test of christian knowledge, this supposed rule of communion, is not found among the express words of scripture. I might therefore ask leave of our protestant brethren, who strenuously maintain this principle, to make an address to them, in their own language, thus: "surely if this rule of christian communion be of such absolute necessity to maintain peace, and secure truth, we may wonder why it is not written down expressly in scripture. Has *Jesus Christ* so little consulted the peace of his churches, and the truth of his gospel, as to neglect so necessary a rule of church communion, without which you suppose, that neither

peace

peace nor truth can be maintained? O what a world of strife and confusion in the churches might have been prevented, by an express appointment of the words of scripture, to be the universal test of knowledge for christian communion? Is the scripture so careful to express all things necessary, and yet is this omitted? May I not thence infer, according to your own principles, that this rule of communion is not necessary? Indeed, in my opinion, it is so far from being written in the bible in express words, that by all the exercise of my reason, I cannot derive it from my bible, by any plain or certain consequence; I have not yet seen evidence enough to believe it to be a sufficient, or an appointed rule; much less of so absolute necessity to christian communion, truth or peace."

Q U E S T I O N XI.

Whether all sorts of protestants may join together as members of the same church?

SECTION. I. **B**Y the name protestant, I intend not only those that protested against the corruptions of the *roman* church, and the edict of the emperor in *Germany* at the beginning of the reformation, but I conclude also all that hold the same general principle, making the bible the only and perfect rule of faith and manners, and giving every single person a right to judge for himself concerning the sense and meaning of the bible in matters of religion, and to practise according to his own sentiments in things sacred.

Now if the question be put, "whether all such persons professing the same protestant principle with all their different sentiments, may be united in the same church," I answer,

1. It is impossible, and they cannot.
2. It is unlawful, and they ought not.
3. If it were both possible and lawful, yet it is highly inexpedient, and therefore it should not be done.

First, "it is impossible, and they cannot join in the same communion." There are some actions necessary in order to christian communion in worship, which are appointed in general in the holy scripture, but must be performed in some particular and determinate way: Now this in the very nature of things makes it necessary to determine the words of scripture to a particular sense; and different sects of protestants determine these words in such different ways, as will often be exceeding hard, and sometimes utterly impossible, to be reconciled and made consistent in one communion: As for instance,

1. Some cannot in conscience attend upon the ministry of a person, who has not been ordained by the imposition of the hands of a diocesan bishop, for they think him no minister of *Christ*; others refuse him for a minister, who has not had the hands of several presbyters imposed in his ordination; and there are a third sort again, that think either of these two ordinations to be unnecessary, if not unlawful; and believe him

him no minister of *Christ*, unless he be chosen by a congregation, and set apart to that work amongst them by fasting and prayer.

Note, that I speak here of those that are each of them strict and rigid in the extremes of their own way, honest and sincere in the main, but zealous and obstinate in their own principles; now these can never join under one ministry, unless their minister has passed through all these three sorts of ordinations, which is not to be expected.

2. Some think it utterly unlawful to pray in public, without a form, lest rash and hasty expressions be “uttered before God,” *Eccles. v. 2.* Others think it equally unlawful to use a form of prayer, lest they “quench the Spirit” which is given to teach them to pray, *1 Thess. v. 19. Eph. vi. 18.* and how can these possibly join in the same prayer?

3. Some esteem the Lord’s prayer so glorious, so perfect, and so universal a prayer for all times and ages, that it should never be omitted in public worship; others fancy it unlawful to be used at all as a prayer, ever since the Spirit was given to men at the ascension of *Christ*, because it is in their sense a confinement of the Spirit to a form of words.

4. Some think the practice of singing the praises of God to be a necessary part of christian worship, and cannot persuade themselves to live without it; others esteem it a mere antichristian invention, and they dare not be present for a moment in an assembly that sings, lest they give countenance to false worship and superstition; and if any other music be joined to the voice, they count it still more hainous and abominable.

5. Some believe the Lord’s supper cannot be celebrated aright at noon, because it was instituted in the evening, and is called a supper; others that live scattered at great distances in a wide country parish, can never meet to communicate in an evening, especially four or five months in the winter; and they think the Lord’s supper at noon is a very lawful and proper practice, and necessary to them, because otherwise they cannot attend it.

6. Some suppose, that it is very irreverent and unlawful to communicate in a sitting posture, and think it their duty to kneel, when they receive the seal of the greatest of blessings from the hands of God; others think no other posture of body lawful besides sitting, because it is a feast, and was instituted with the proper gestures at a table; and many foreign protestants esteem sitting to have too much familiarity and irreverence, and kneeling too much like adoration of the bread, and therefore always stand at that ordinance. And here we may suppose some narrow-spirited christians, of each sort, that dare not be present at the sacrament, where a different gesture is used, lest they seem to encourage a sinful practice by their communicating together.

7. Some are persuaded, that none have a right to the communion that were not baptized by dipping, and that upon a profession of their faith, for they count all the rest unbaptized; and these can never join at the Lord’s supper, with a minister or people that were only baptized in infancy by sprinkling, and think that sufficient.

Some are satisfied that there is no holy-day in the week but *saturday*, or the seventh, and they require public worship and the communion on that day; others think the first day of the week is alone holy, and they demand the celebration of the Lord’s supper on that day constantly; nor can they leave all the common businesses of life to attend on the worship of *saturday*.

Now every man sees how impracticable it is to bring these different sorts of protestants to the settled communion of the same church. I confess I have represented their different sentiments in their extremes, and in the highest degrees of opposition; but it must be granted also, that several such sort of christians are to be found, whose weaker judgments and warm zeal, have carried these matters to the same extremes of opposition in which I have represented them; therefore my argument stands good, and such a promiscuous communion appears impossible.

Yet here I would lay down this caution; that though these sorts of protestants are necessarily excluded from mutual communion, it is not because either of them are unworthy of it, or because it is unlawful to communicate with each other, but merely because their different and contrary forms of worship render it impossible. Let them not therefore censure or judge one another, but so far as true piety appears, let them account each other good christians, and be ready to do all proper christian offices for, and toward each other; and let them wait till God shall convince either of them of their excessive rigour, and unreasonable strictness, in their particular opinions, and in the mean time let them be heartily willing to join with each other in such parts of worship in which they agree, where just occasions may require it.

Secondly, If the thing were possible, and such a mingled communion of all professed protestants could be practised, yet there are some cases wherein it would be unlawful, and ought not to be practised: For several persons may believe the bible to be the only and perfect rule of faith and duty, and yet may put such a sense upon it, as is either dishonourable, dangerous, or destructive of the christian faith; I have made this appear at large under the foregoing question; there I have shewn that there may be *antropomorphite* and *arian* protestants, *sabellian*, *socinian*, and *pelagian*; *rational*, and *enthusiastic*; *literal*, and *allegorical*; *calvinist*, *arminian*, and *antinomian*; there I have largely proved, that persons professing the bible, may deny the divinity and satisfaction of *Christ*, the real resurrection of *Christ*, the operations of the holy Spirit, the final resurrection of the body, and several other such important doctrines, by turning the expressions of scripture to a mere allegorical and figurative sense: Now as a certain author says, "If a man use the words of scripture, but impose a very different and new sense upon them, he may thereby as well bring in a new gospel, as if he used words of his own; and so he subjects himself justly to the anathema, or curse of the apostle. Gal. i. 8, 9. "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." It is a very just and remarkable saying to this purpose of doctor *Reynolds*, in conference with *Hart*: "He who believes the words of *Christ*, in the sense of antichrist, and rejects the sense of *Christ*, and his Spirit, is not a christian, but is, in deed and truth, antichristian." Now with such sort of persons, christian communion ought not to be maintained, for they who deny the christian faith, can have no right to the special ordinances of *Christ*.

Thirdly, If such a promiscuous communion of all professing protestants were both possible and lawful, yet it is highly inexpedient. Now the apostle has determined it, that things which are utterly inexpedient, and such as hinder the edification of the church, should not be practised, 1 *Cor.* x. 23.

The great and evident inexpediency, and the many inconveniencies of such a community, will appear under the following heads.

SECTION II. Inconvenience I. What a most uncomfortable communion would christians have among brethren and sisters, in the same community of such wild and distant

distant principles, as those ten differences of christians I have reckoned up under the former question? Read over all their opinions again, and say, how utterly inexpedient is it that these should be united in one church! "What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has *Christ* with *Belial*, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 *Cor.* vi. 14 — 16. For he that disbelieves any necessary articles of the christian faith, we may rank him among the infidels.

Christian communion, in the pleasure and profit of it, consists very much in an union of hearts in constant public worship, in praying occasionally with one another, and conferring together about divine things: But what bonds of charity can unite their hearts, where one justly suspects the other's faith in points of greatest importance? How can they join with pleasure in hearing the same word of God, while their sense and meaning under those words is so extremely different, and contrary to each other, as light and darkness, as God and the creature, as heaven and earth? What pleasure in joining to address the same Saviour, while one believes him to be the true and eternal God, the other thinks him but a mere man? What harmony is there in their joys and praises, while one adores this redeemer for bearing the punishment of all his sins, and dying as a sacrifice in his stead; and the other, by the same expressions of adoration, only gives him thanks for confirming his doctrine of remission of sins by becoming a martyr for it? What delight can the members of the same church take in conversing with each other, who differ so widely even in things of experimental and practical godliness? While one is relating the power and freedom of divine grace in convincing him of sin, and shining into his heart to give him the saving knowledge of the gospel, in turning his mind from earth to heaven, and changing his whole soul, with all the powers of it, into a divine temper, in securing him from this and that temptation, and over-ruling his spirit to persevere in the paths of holiness; the other believes that divine grace and power has no hand in all this, but what is only providential, by external means and helps; and that this piety is really to be ascribed to the freedom of his own will; and perhaps a third person shall interpose, and say in *antinomian* language, "There is no need you should be so solicitous about these lesser matters of freedom from temptation, or the mortification of sin, either by divine grace, or by your own will; if you are but a believer in *Christ*, and your faith be strong, sin cannot do you hurt, and you shall certainly be saved." What wretched communion in prayer, or holy conference, must be maintained among fellow-members of the same church, whose opinions are so fearfully divided?

SECTION III. Inconvenience II. What an unhappy station must a minister have amongst such a people? How difficult to fulfil his ministrations of prayer and preaching without offence? Or rather how impossible? Surely the work of a preacher is to explain the scripture to his hearers; but he can hardly step out beyond the very express words of scripture, but he breaks in upon some of their darling sentiments: He can scarce comment upon any text, but he opposes the one side or the other of two contrary opinions, and grieves some of the flock: He can hardly speak of the person of *Christ Jesus* the mediator, but he offends the *arian*, the *samosatenian*, or *athanasian*: He can scarce express any thing about the redemption and atonement of *Christ*, but he awakens either the *calvinist*, or the *socinian*, to jealousy, and affronts their sacred doctrines: He must not ascribe glory to the Father, Son and Spirit, lest he displease

the *unitarians* in his assembly; nor must he neglect it, lest the *trinitarian* take umbrage. He dares not name the word perseverance, lest the *arminian* be angry; and if he should talk of falling from grace, the *calvinist* trembles, and half despairs.

And as preaching would be rendered almost impracticable, unless he confined himself only to mere moral duties, such as *Seneca* might preach; so all his ministrations in prayer and thanksgiving would be most unhappily perplexed and confined: He must not pray for forgiveness of sins, for the *antinomian* believer does not want it; nor for almighty sanctifying grace, for the *remonstrant* christian knows no need of it: He must not confess original sin, for the *pelagian* disowns himself guilty; nor dares he mention a word of the imputed righteousness of *Christ*, or justification by faith alone, lest half the assembly rise in arms against him: Nor must he venture to give thanks for the free electing love of God, lest two thirds of his church shew a murmuring dissent. Surely there is little left for this man to talk of in his pulpit, but what he may borrow from *Plato*, *Plutarch*, or *Epiſtetus*.

SECTION IV. To prevent this inconvenience, the patrons of this opinion assert, "That a minister ought not to impose any particular sense on any of the controverted scriptures in his preaching;" but all his business is freely and fairly to acquaint the people with those various senses of scripture, in which the different sects of christianity have contrived to explain it: He must represent the reasons impartially on both sides, and leave them to the judgment of the hearers, "without biasing of them, as one expresses it, by the needless declaration of his own opinion:" And they tell us, "it would be much more edifying to all christians, if ministers in their public discourses expressly asserted no other things than such as all, who read the scripture and receive it for the rule of their faith, acknowledge to be certain." To this I reply,

Reply I. What poor food would this be for hungry and thirsty souls to be treated with nothing else in a christian church, but the mere inculcation of moral duties, or the narration of christian controversies? What support could a weary and heavy laden sinner, bowed down and broken with a sense of guilt, obtain from such a discourse? Must a poor perishing creature, under the fears of the wrath of God, have no relief given it from a just and full explication of the sacrifice of *Christ*, because the *socinian* does not believe it? And must a weak christian, conflicting long with sins and temptations, have no encouragement from the doctrine of inward effectual grace, lest the *arminian* take offence at it? Is this that way of preaching that *Christ* has ordained to save guilty and impotent creatures, by a deep silence of the true and only relief, or a mere dubious proposal of it?

Reply II. Besides, how can a minister answer it to God, or his own conscience, if he sees errors in matters of importance growing amongst men, perhaps in his own church too, and does not attempt to prevent or refute them by his best interpretation of the word of God? Is he not "set for the defence and confirmation of the gospel," *Phil. i. 17*. Is he not bound to maintain "sound doctrine, and to teach no other," *1 Tim. i. 3*. Must not he "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?" *Jude verse 3*. How narrow is the work of a gospel minister, and how much less useful is his labour or his office, if he be forbid this service to *Christ*, and the church?

There were some little points of controversy, in the apostles days, about the lawfulness of meats, &c. which if they were never determined, would not be destructive

structive to christianity; concerning these, the apostle at some seasons directs to "keep our faith, or opinion, to ourselves:" *Rom. xiv. 22.* Yet at other times he bids *Timosby* preach his own sense of them, and declare for christian liberty, and the free use of food. *1 Tim. iv. 6.* "If thou put the brethren in mind of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of *Jesus Christ*," &c. Now can we think that *Timosby* should publicly give his sense in such circumstantial things, and yet not give it in the most important matters of the satisfaction and atonement of *Christ*, and the doctrines of the efficacious sanctifying grace of the Spirit? Read *2 Tim. ii. 14, 15, 18, 23, &c. Tit. i. 9, 10, 13.* and chapter *ii. 1, 2.* and judge if the apostle requires, or even indulges those young preachers to propose important doctrines in such a doubtful way, as may minister questions, and gender strifes; and in such an indifferent manner, as though it was no matter which opinion his hearers embraced: Surely this would be the way to keep men ever learning, and never coming to a settled knowledge of the truth.

Reply III. I might add in the third place, how can it be supposed, that every minister who has determined his own sentiments in these controverted points, should represent the different senses of scripture in just and impartial language, so as not to favour either side? Will not his own opinion give a warmth of delivery, or a brightness of expression, while he is representing the reasons of it? And will he not be tempted with a cold and languid faintness, to propose the arguments of those that differ from him? It is utterly as unreasonable to expect such an unbiassed indifference in his explications of the important points in the word of God, as it is unrighteous to require it.

Reply IV. In the last place I reply, that such a practice as this would kindle contentions instead of quenching them: It would raise perpetual strife in the church, instead of composing it; and by relating the opinions and arguments on all sides, would furnish every warm temper with weapons offensive and defensive, to carry on the controversial war, and fight it out at home. This thought naturally leads me to mention the third inconvenience, of forming such a mixed and motley church.

SECTION V. Inconvenience III. This sort of communion would be much more likely to tear itself to pieces by perpetual jangles, disputes and quarrels, than to maintain peace and unity. Nor could this pretended bond of peace, an agreement in express words of scripture, secure it. Our Saviour has already given a fair decision of this matter, when he assures us, that "a house divided against itself can never stand," *Matth. xii. 25.* These persons that entertain so different opinions in religion, might agree well enough in the common affairs of life, if they were not joined in one church, and by that means brought constantly to worship together; but when they must hear continually the same sermons, attend the same prayers, and offer thanks to God together in the same words, with different meanings, it is not possible to secure them from awakening their jarring and contrary sentiments, whensoever any thing relating to those subjects is mentioned; and it is most likely too it will rouse their anger, their contempt and their uncharitable censures of those that differ from them in points of importance. Thus the proposed band of peace would become a firebrand of perpetual war, till it ended in divisions and desolation.

And this event may justly and reasonably be expected upon the election of every new officer in the church, as often as death, or removal of communion, or incapacity, &c. give occasion for a new choice. Will not each party be zealous to elect a person of their own sentiments? And the church by this means be crumbled into many parties, and divided amongst many candidates? Thus the passions of men will have a
strong

strong temptation to exert themselves in wrath and reproaches; nor can any of them be persuaded to yield and drop their own candidates, which might be much more easily done, if the competitors were of the same opinion.

SECTION VI. Inconvenience IV. Such a principle or test of communion, might in some few years quite change the ministers and ministrations, the whole scheme and order of a church of *Christ*, from moderate *calvinist* or *lutheran*, to *antinomian*, *pelagian*, or *socinian*, from christian worshippers to antichristian idolaters, and from a temple of God to a synagogue of *Satan*; and according to this rule, the church has no power, nor right, to prevent it. Suppose a church of pious *lutherans*, or *calvinists*, consisting of thirty or forty members, whereof but eleven or twelve are men; if providentially six or seven of these die in a few years, and six or seven bold *antinomians*, or *socinians*, are admitted on the mere profession of scripture: They become the majority, and consequently the rulers of the whole church; they chuse pastors, and appoint ministrations and orders according to their own sense of scripture; what must all the twenty or thirty original members of the church do, that walked and worshipped many years together in holiness and comfort, according to the doctrine and practice of *Luther*, or *Calvin*? Must this lesser party of men, and perhaps almost all the women of the church, sit still under such preaching, and such ministrations, as an *antinomian*, or a *socinian* pastor would entertain them with, to their weekly public sorrow, and their mourning in secret every day? Or must they quietly depart from the communion of the church, and each of them seek their better edification in new churches where they could find it?

Perhaps also this church might be possessed of many temporal advantages, they might have a fair and well-built place of worship belonging to the community, with gifts or annuities for the support of the ministry and the poor; plate and linnen, and other utensils for the celebration of holy ordinances given to the church: Must seven or eight professed *antinomians*, or *socinians*, by this means become the possessors of it? And the old members, while they seek their better edification, relinquish their first society and place of worship, and all these temporal possessions at once, which were given for the sacred uses of that *calvinist* or *lutheran* church? And yet they have their own poor to maintain still, who cannot find their edification in the *socinian*, or *antinomian* worship? Can that be a necessary rule of church-communion, which would thus injure the greatest part of the church, including the women, and rob them all of their spiritual profit, and their outward advantages at once?

The tables may be turned, and the same inconveniencies would arise to a *socinian*, or *antinomian* church, by admitting *calvinists*, or *lutherans*.

Now if such a sort of mixed communion be impracticable, unlawful, and highly inexpedient, as I think it is plainly proved beyond contradiction, the question must be determined on the negative side, and all sorts of protestants cannot be members of one particular church.

A very natural question arises here, "whether no christians must join in communion, but those that are in all things of the same opinion?" This shall be the subject of my next enquiry.

QUESTION

Q U E S T I O N XII.

Whether no christians must join in the same communion, but those that are in all things of the same opinion?

SECTION I. I HOPE there is nothing that I have said in the foregoing discourses can be interpreted into so narrow a sense, as to exclude all protestants from the same communion, but those whose sentiments are exactly alike. This would make all communion impracticable; for it will be hard to find two persons in the world, that in every point of religion have the same sentiments: Or if here and there half a dozen, or half a score christians were found that came very near to each other in opinion, these must every where set up distinct societies by themselves; thus the church of *Christ* would be crumbled into endless divisions. To this question therefore I answer in the first place,

Answer I. That as the affairs of the christian world are found in this imperfect state, it seems generally most adviseable for every person to join in constant and fixed communion with such a church, or be admitted members of such a particular christian society, whose public profession comes nearest to his own sentiments, where he can possibly have opportunity to do it; this would lay a foundation for the greatest union and peace among the members of the same church; considering the folly and weakness of human nature, and how much our differences of opinion endanger our charity, certainly this would be the easiest and surest method of answering the design of those apostolical directions and wishes. *Rom. xv. 5, 6.* "God grant you to be like minded, that ye may with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God," &c. *1 Cor. i. 10.* "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment." And in order to shew their general and extensive charity, they may take proper opportunities for occasional communion with other churches that differ from them in matters of less importance; and they should be as ready to admit the members of such churches to the same privilege of occasional communion with themselves. Thus they might maintain the unity of the church of *Christ* in general, and preserve peace, both abroad and at home, without contention or schism.

SECTION II. But to declare my opinion particularly on this head; I would say, that there are two sorts of persons that ought never to communicate in the same sacraments; and there are three sorts of christians that need not join as members of the same church, yet may occasionally maintain communion with each other; and I think all other sorts of protestants may hold constant communion together.

The persons that should never attempt to join in the same communion, either constant or occasional, are these.

First, Those that differ in fundamental articles of doctrine or practice, or such articles, as either side supposes to be fundamental and necessary to salvation; for if they can never hope to meet together in heaven upon the principles they profess, I see

see no reason why they should join in solemn acts of special communion on earth ; nor does the holy scripture require or encourage, but rather forbids it. " What communion hath light with darknes? Righteousness with unrighteousness? The temple of God with idols? And he that believeth with an infidel?" 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

Secondly, Those that are so widely divided in their opinions about some practical points of worship or discipline, which are necessary to be practised in communicating together, but are utterly inconsistent with each other : Several such I have mentioned in the beginning of the former question ; as, those that think public liturgies or singing of psalms necessary, and those that think them utterly unlawful: Such as esteem episcopal ordination of absolute necessity, and such as believe it to be sinful and antichristian, &c. These cannot hold communion together in special worship, and hardly in the general ordinances of it.

The persons that should content themselves with occasional communion together, are chiefly such as these, viz.

First, Those that give evidence of serious piety, but differ in very important points of doctrine, which yet they cannot certainly call fundamental ; and especially such points as continually occur in preaching, praying, or other parts of worship, and would frequently disquiet and disturb the devotion of one party, or the other. Such I may suppose the better sort of *remonstrants*, or *arminians*, compared with the *calvinists*, and the better sort of enthusiasts, or *antinomians*.

Secondly, Those that differ much in the external forms of worship or discipline, which yet are not utterly inconsistent with each other ; but if fixed and united in one single community, they might probably occasion frequent disturbances ; such are the moderate episcopalians, and baptists, *lutherans* and *calvinists*, &c.

Those I call moderate, who are not so strict and rigid in their opinions, nor run into such extremes, nor place so great a necessity in their particular modes of worship or discipline, but being persons of serious piety and of extensive charity, they think it proper to omit or alter, on particular occasions, what may be offensive to either side ; or at least they allow either side their own particular practices and forms. These may very well unite in occasional communion, though they are fixed members of the churches of their own persuasion. A church that communicates kneeling, may allow communion to one that stands or sits : A church baptized in infancy, or in adult age, may allow communion to those that are of the contrary practice in baptism. A church that receives members upon a stricter profession of inward and experimental godliness, may allow communion to one that has been admitted a member of another church, where the profession of christianity is more large and general. A church that holds no bodily presence of *Christ* in the sacrament, may allow communion with one that believes consubstantiation, or that the body of *Christ* is present together with the bread, &c. Such occasional instances of communion might tend to enlarge the spirits of men into a good opinion of each other, and increase christian charity. But if the want of opportunity to join with christians of their own sentiments, should call or encourage them to unite as fixed members of the same community, they should agree to some sort of articles of peace, not to disturb the quiet of that church, by breaking in upon and overturning it's old and usual forms of ministration and government : For the peace of the church is more valuable

valuable than the amendment of some improper forms, where the life and power of godliness is preserved.

Thirdly, Those that differ in less points of christianity, but are of unsettled and unfociable principles or humours, and cannot content themselves without shifting from church to church, nor be easy with any that differ from them, without a zealous propagation of their own opinions, contrary to the rules that the apostle has given for the peace of the church, *Rom. xiv.* Some learned writers suppose these to be the heretics in the scripture sense. Surely these should be contented with occasional communion, and they should give satisfactory evidence of inward piety, before they are received to any communion at all.

Now if these three sorts are admitted occasionally to communicate in the special ordinances of *Christ*, this seems to me sufficient to answer the canons of the apostle, where we are bid "to receive such as *Christ* has received, and that without doubtful disputations." *Rom. xv. 7, 8.* and *Rom. xiv. 1.* Whereas if they should be admitted to a full and fixed membership, power and privilege in the same church, without any limitation by articles of peace, that would so much endanger the common edification and peace of the whole body, as to run counter to other canons of the same apostle; "Let all things be done to edification." *1 Cor. xiv. 26.* "Follow the things that make for peace." *Rom. xiv. 19.*

As for all other protestants, whose differences are of less moment, notwithstanding they may be very various, and almost infinite, yet if they are of a peaceful spirit, and give evidence of hearty and sincere piety, I think they may join, where they have opportunity, as complete and constant members of the same church, and worship the same God together, through the same Lord *Jesus Christ*, by the same Spirit, and fulfil all duties of christian fellowship, to his glory, and their mutual edification.

When any such sort of difficulties happen in relation to the communion of christians, which cannot be determined by the plain reason and nature of things, and "concerning which we have received no certain commandment from the Lord," the wisest man on earth can go no farther than to say with the apostle, "I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful; I suppose therefore that it is good for the present" case to act in this or that manner, *1 Cor. vii. 25, 26.* If such a modesty of language became that great man *St. Paul*, surely every lesser minister, or christian, would transgress the bounds of decency, to assume more to himself,

SECTION III. An illustration on the three last questions.

What I have advanced on these subjects may receive some light perhaps, and may prevail more toward the conviction of my readers by an illustration of these cases, by a parallel instance taken from a society of philosophers: For when the same case is put in new subjects of another kind, it does not meet with the same predetermined judgment, as in subjects that have been long controverted.

Suppose several *Stoic* philosophers join in a society, and have weekly lectures read to them, by one or more professors whom they have chosen, and once a month hold a feast, wherein some peculiar ceremonies are performed to the honour of *Zeno*, the master and founder of their sect. Every person that is admitted to communicate in their feast, must profess himself a *Stoic* philosopher, a follower of *Zeno*, and to receive the precepts of *Zeno* for his principles of doctrine

and practice; and he ought to give satisfaction by conference to the members or professors of this *stoical* society, that he owns *Zeno's* precepts, and that in such a sense, as is sufficient, in their judgment, to make him a good *stoic*.

Now if any one shall mingle some of the doctrines of *Epicurus* therewith, or expound *Zeno* so as to make happiness consist in sensual pleasures, this overthrows the *stoical* doctrine, which makes happiness to consist in wisdom and virtue; and such an one cannot be admitted to any communion with them in their festivals, constant or occasional.

But if any person shall mingle much of *platonism*, or *pythagorean* philosophy with the *stoic*, and expound *Zeno*, in some part of his doctrine, in the sense of *Plato*, or *Pythagoras*, perhaps he may be invited and admitted as a guest at the *stoical* feast, and so hold occasional communion with them; because he is truly a *stoic*, though a favourer of other sects. His notions are not ruinous and destructive to the most valuable principles of *stoical* philosophy; though he differs so much, that it would endanger that particular *stoical* society, if this person were received as a stated member to all the powers and privileges thereof.

But as for others who hold the *stoical* doctrine, though one expounds it according to *Epiſtetus*, another believes it in the exposition of *Antoninus*, another in the exposition of *Seneca*, who were all *stoics*, these may all be admitted to constant communion, and as members of the same society; for the great ends and designs of their society are hereby promoted and secured; their several differences are but small, and very consistent with the cultivation of *stoicism*, and the benefits of the society.

In short, those who hold so little of *Zeno's* precepts, in the sense of the society, as neither to be consistent with it's being, nor well-being, must be excluded from all communion with it; such are *Epicurus* and *Democritus*, even though they should subscribe all the words of *Zeno*.

Those who hold no more of *Zeno's* precepts in the sense of the society, than is just consistent with the being of the society, but may naturally prove fatal and ruinous to the well-being of it, should be admitted only to occasional communion; such are those who admire *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, and mix their directions with the doctrine of *stoicism*.

Those who hold so much of *Zeno's* precepts in the sense of the *stoical* society, as to be consistent with the being, well-being, and edification of the society, may be admitted as fixed members thereof, and be intitled to all it's powers and privileges; such are the followers of *Epiſtetus*, *Seneca*, &c.

I hope such sort of parallel instances may give some light and direction in these affairs of communion among christians: Yet these things being not exactly delivered in the word of God, nor particular rules about them determined clearly in scripture, it is evident that our Lord *Jesus Christ* intended that the light of nature and reason, the common principles and rules of order and society, and the most prevailing prospect of holiness, truth and love, should determine our actions in such cases; still keeping close to every thing that he has revealed, so far as we can find his will in scripture; and in all other things making the best use of our christian prudence and charity, for the glory of God, and the good of men. 1 Cor. xiv. 40, 33.

“ Let all things be done decently, and in order, for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. ” 1 Cor. x. 31, 32, 33. “ Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Give

Give none offence, neither to the *jews*, nor the gentiles, nor to the church of God : Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Since it is impossible in this imperfect state, that any thing in civil or religious affairs should be free from imperfections, those methods must at all times be esteemed the best, that aim at the best ends, and are attended with the fewest inconveniencies. *1 Cor. x. 23.* " All things that are lawful, are not expedient; all things that are lawful, edify not." *Rom. xiv. 17, 18.* " The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost. He that in these things serveth *Christ* with a humble sincerity of heart and design, is acceptable to God, and approved of men," even though he should not always hit upon the most prudent means.

But let peace and edification be ever in our eye, as our chief ends in church-affairs, according to that great canon of the apostle, *Rom. xiv. 19.* " Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Amen.

[The following text is extremely faint and illegible, appearing to be bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

Q. 2. ... D. I. S.

D I S C O U R S E I.

A pattern for a dissenting preacher.

J O H N vii. 46.

The officers answered, never man spake like this man.

THE *jewish* church was grown very corrupt when our Lord *Jesus Christ* was sent into the world, as the reformer of his people, and the Saviour of mankind. The rulers of the church hated reformation, and would not suffer any thing to be altered in their establishment. Therefore their rage against our Saviour rose high, and the "pharisees and chief priests sent their officers to seize him," as you find in verse 32. to seize *Jesus*, the best preacher that ever spoke in the name of God to men: They sent men to silence him in the midst of his sermon, to summon and constrain him to appear before them. The chief priests were the highest ecclesiastical governors, and the pharisees were a set of men that applied themselves to the study of their law, and their worship, and separated themselves from the rest of the people, under a pretence of greater holiness. These *jewish* clergy, and *jewish* devotees, joined to send their servants upon this wicked errand to lay hold on *Christ* the Lord. The persons that were sent, are called officers in my text: Probably they might be some ecclesiastical officers that belonged to their courts, because we find that the priests had power over them, and they gave them commission for their work, though we are not acquainted with their particular title.

But when they came and heard the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth, his sublime doctrines of truth and mercy, and his kind invitations to thirsty sinners to receive living water, as you find in a few words before my text, they were astonished and struck silent, they were inwardly restrained from executing their impious commission; they returned to their masters without having done their work: And when they asked them the reason why they had not brought the preacher with them, they boldly replied, that their consciences withheld their hand from him, for "never man spake like this man."

To improve these words to our present advantage, we shall consider,

I. What

- I. What difference there was between our Lord's ministry, and the preaching of other men in that day.
- II. What different effects it had on those that heard him.
- III. Draw some inferences for our instruction, and some for our practice.

I. We shall consider " what difference there was between our Lord's ministry, and the preaching of other men in that day."

It is very likely these officers had been wont to hear the sermons of the scribes, and the doctrines of the *Jews* in their synagogues, where *Moses* and the prophets were read every sabbath, and generally expounded to the people; but there was something in the matter of these discourses of our Lord, something in the manner of speaking, but much more in the peculiar power attending the words, which made these officers conclude, they had never heard such a preacher in all their lives.

1. First then, there is something in the matter of his preaching different from what those ecclesiastical officers had been used to hear. Though both *Christ*, and the scribes and pharisees, all pretended to take the bible for their text, yet there was a great variety in the subjects which they enlarged upon, and the substance of their discourses. They expounded the same moral law which our Saviour did, but it was in so poor and trifling a sense, in so strange and unreasonable a manner, so far from the spiritual design and divine meaning of it, that our Lord found, when he came into the world, he had need to go over it all again with a better comment, lest the " blind should lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch."

They set forth their sense of it in so gross and carnal an exposition, as though all the commands forbid nothing else but the external actions of sin, and required nothing else but the outward performance of duty; whereas our Lord *Jesus Christ* makes it appear to them by convincing reasons, *Matth. v.* that he that breaks one of the commands of God but in thought, he is counted a breaker of the law in the sight of God, the infinite Spirit, before whom our thoughts and intentions of mind, and all the motions of our hearts, are esteemed as our actual performances.

They expounded away the law of God indeed, and they lost the beauty, the power, and the perfection of it by their comments. Our blessed *Jesus* came to restore it again. They made holiness to be a very little thing, and an easy matter; whereas our Lord shews, it is exceeding hard " to enter in at the strait gate, and there needs labour and pains to travel onwards in the narrow path " that leads to heaven.

Again, they dwelt much upon the ceremonial part of their religion, with too great a neglect of the moral part of it; but *Christ* insisted much upon the more substantial and weighty matters of the law, righteousness and truth, piety and love. The pharisees, who were devotees of their church, were careful to pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin, and doubtless their priests were not backward to preach it; but our Lord *Jesus Christ* makes it his more constant care, and his perpetual business, to establish them in the spirituality and perfection of the moral law of God, and touches very little upon ceremonies, for he thought the scribes and pharisees did that sufficiently of themselves.

Again, they insisted upon the traditions of the fathers, and councils, and inventions of men; *Christ*, upon the commandments and words of God. And when any point of doctrine, and especially when any point of practice was in dispute, their recourse was to the fathers; what do the traditions say, what say the ancients? But
our

our Lord *Jesus Christ* refers them still to some part of his Father's word, and quotes a text, either to prove a doctrine, or a duty.

Thus the teachers of the established church, in that day, instructed the people to build their hopes of heaven upon their natural birth, upon their relation to *Abraham*, and upon their passage through that original ceremony of circumcision, whereby they were initiated into the *jewish* church, and thought they were made sufficient members of it for eternal happiness. Our Lord *Jesus* taught them to build their hopes, rather upon regeneration, upon faith and repentance, upon the inward and mighty change of their souls, upon an alteration of their whole nature, and a turn of their hearts toward God, upon a humble confession of sins, and a dependence on the forgiving grace of God. In *Matt. iii.* we have a particular account what it was the pharisees taught them to build their hopes of heaven upon, viz. their being children of *Abraham*; and *John* the baptist, who was the forerunner of our Lord, cuts off that hold; he nullifies that foundation, and makes it vanish. "Think not to say within yourselves, we are children of *Abraham*, but bring forth fruits of repentance." verses 8, 9. And *Christ*, in *John iii. 3, 5.* shews, that "if a man be not born again," let him pretend never so much to a birth of the family of *Abraham*, and to his passage through the initial rite of circumcision, the ordinance of that day, it was in vain for him to hope to enter into the kingdom of God.

They preached up the doctrine of justification by their own works, for the pharisees trusted in themselves that they were righteous; *Luke viii. 9.* and in their opinion, whoever would follow the rules of the pharisees, must be righteous, as well as they, in the sight of God, and thus go to heaven upon the foundation of their own duties. But our Lord *Jesus Christ* continually shews men the imperfection of their own righteousness, and their utter insufficiency to perform any obedience, for which they might be accepted of God to eternal life. He preached the gospel of salvation by the mercy and forgiveness of God his Father, and gave hints of his own atonement for sin, and his mediation with God, as far as was proper in that day and time.

They taught the people implicit faith in their doctors, or teachers and governors, and that they ought to believe as the church believes, not allowing too nice an enquiry into all the particular grounds of it. This evidently appears by the reply that these officers received from the chief priests; for when they acknowledged that our Lord *Jesus* "spake as never man spake," the priests were ready to reprove them for giving too much credit to such a preacher as *Christ* was, "What! Do ye believe? Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him?" *John vii. 48, 49.* And will you dare hearken to a preacher, and doctrines, that the rulers and pharisees reject and renounce, and never gave you encouragement to depend upon?" So the man that was born blind, *John ix.* when he argued with them, that surely he must come from God, that could cure one that was born blind, and restore him to sight again? "Thou wert altogether born in sin, say they, and dost thou teach us?" verse 34. And they excommunicated him, or cast him out. But our Lord, when he preaches to the multitude, he bids them all "search the scriptures; these are they that testify of me," *John v. 39.* If I speak not according to the language of divine revelation, and the word of God, believe me not; I stand or fall by that test. Thus you see in numerous instances, notwithstanding our Saviour, and the scribes and pharisees, would all seem to take the bible for their text, yet how very different the matter or subject of their discourses were.

2. There was something in the manner of his preaching, that was different from the doctors of the *jewish* church, as well as in the matter of it. Whether the *Jews* affected

affected any pomp of oratory, or studied periods as the *Greeks* did, is hard to say; but it is certain, that our Saviour used the plainest and most simple style, that every one could understand: Our Lord conveyed the doctrines of the gospel to men, in such a manner, as was most suitable to attain his sacred purposes. Sometimes he spoke in parables, but with this design to cover under them such mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as were not fit to be divulged in their full brightness and light at that day.

Few of the *Jewish* teachers preached from their hearts, when they preached pure and strict religion, for they practised very little of it. But our Lord never preached up any part of virtue or piety but what he practised. Nor when they insisted upon traditions and ceremonies, did they always perform them; for our Saviour complains, "they laid heavy burdens upon the people, which they would not touch with one of their fingers," *Matth.* xxiii. 4. But our Lord *Jesus Christ* preached with the greatest sincerity, for he believed what he taught, and practised what he required.

They preached in a cold, dull and insipid way, as they must do, because their hearts were not in their work. But our blessed Lord, had doubtless a solemn and awful air of unfeigned religion on his face, and piety and goodness sat on his countenance, while the words of truth and salvation were poured out from his lips. He taught the things of God to the people, as one that had zeal for God, and a tender and compassionate concern for the souls of men; his zeal appears sufficiently in the actions of his life, *John* ii. 17. "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," it wasted his natural spirits. How warm was he in reproofing sin, even the sins of the rulers and priests of the church in that day! How kind and melting was his language, in inviting sinners to repent and return to God! How large his promises of pardon, in the name of God his Father, "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men!" *Matth.* xii. 31. How moving are his exhortations to faith and hope in himself! *Matth.* xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Come and take upon you my yoke and my burden, for my yoke is easy, and my burden light. Come and learn of me," practise what I preach, and imitate what I do.

The scribes taught by way of exposition, and poor expositors they were of divine revelation; and probably they never enforced holiness on the conscience with solemn and pathetic words; *Christ* spake with authority, as one that came from God, clothed with power. *Matth.* vii. 28. "The people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."

3. Not only in the matter and in the manner of *Christ's* preaching, there was some difference from that of the doctors of the age; but thirdly, there was more difference between his preaching and their's, in the power that attended his sermons, for God was with him. But the *Jewish* church was grown so degenerate, that, though God himself did once establish it, yet now he had almost left and forsaken their priests and their teachers. There was an evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, that attended the words of *Christ* inwardly to the hearts and consciences of men. Therefore *Christ* could say concerning his preaching, "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," *John* vi. 63. The Spirit of God was given him without measure, as *John* the baptist confessed concerning him. *John* iii. 34. "The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, the Lord had anointed him to preach the glad tidings of salvation to men, to unbind the captives, and to bind up those that were wounded and broken in heart," as in *Luke* iv. 18. which he himself cites from the prophecy of *Isaiab*, which was spoken of old concerning him. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him and went with his words, that made the officers acknowledge, "never man spake like him;" for they had been used before to a preaching

without

without the Spirit, a preaching where the Spirit of God was hardly found: And when they came to a preacher with whom God was, no wonder they confessed something different between him and them. Now this power, this secret power, that attended the ministry of *Christ*, had various remarkable effects upon the hearers, which leads me to

II. The second general head proposed, that is, "what were the effects of the preaching of *Christ*, whereby it is further differenced from that of the *jewish* doctors." And in this part of my discourse I shall range all my thoughts under these three heads; the effect it had upon the multitude, the effect it had upon his own chosen ones; and the effect that it had upon his enemies.

1. Let us consider the effect that his preaching had on the multitude. It amazed them, it gave them uncommon surprise, *Matth.* vii. 28. "The people were astonished at his doctrine." They wondered, not only at his miracles whereby he confirmed his sermons, but at the sermons themselves. We have a very particular account of this in *Mark* vi. 2. "Many that heard were astonished, saying, whence hath this man these things?" It set many of them upon the enquiry, and upon a search of heart, what all this his doctrine might mean, and what they had of concern in it. They began to debate the case with themselves, whether he came from God, or no, and whether this was the *Christ*, or no. There was no such stir among the people while they attended upon the common sermons of the scribes, and the teachers of the *jewish* church. They came back as they went, they sat unconcerned and unmoved. They heard the oration and the performance, they seemed perhaps to be pleased with some of those that pronounced better than their neighbours, and they went away unimproved, unless in uncharitableness against the followers of *Christ*, the new preacher, and in zeal for ceremonies, some of which also God had not instituted: These were the improvements of the church of the *Jews*, that attended upon the common preachers of that day.

When a nation had been a long time buried in ignorance and darkness, and been kept under by the sovereignty and policy of priests, and there springs up a new teacher among them, with some characters of divinity about him, they are all awakened and set upon the enquiry; they see the difference between their own dull hypocritical teachers, and the new Spirit of piety and devotion. They never before troubled themselves about inward religion, but now there is a public open acknowledgement of something uncommon, and they are willing to consider, whether it be divine, or no. Such was the case of the *Jews* when our Saviour was sent among them; such was the time of the reformation of this nation from popery; and those that taught the gospel of *Christ* in that day, in opposition to the popish religion, were called new teachers, "as in bishop *Burnet's* history," their ministry was very different from that of the romish priests and fryars, and people were set upon the enquiry, for God opened their eyes; their doctrine was according to the gospel, their form and manner of preaching was warm and zealous, practical and experimental, and the Spirit of God was with them.

This is therefore the first effect of the ministry of *Christ*, and will be the natural effect upon the multitude, when a divine preacher, that is distinguished from the common indolent teachers of the times wherein he lives, shall be called of God to preach in his name to sinners for the salvation of men.

2. Let us consider the effect that the preaching of *Christ* had upon his own chosen ones. It wrought a mighty and wonderful change upon them. Some of them were great and grievous sinners, and they were converted into saints. Some of them loved the

the world too well, but afterwards they loved God and *Christ* above all, and renounced this world, in the hope and pursuit of a better. *Mary Magdalene*, who is represented as a vile wretch, comes and sits weeping at the feet of *Jesus*, acknowledging her sins, she receives large forgiveness, and loves her Saviour much, *Luke* vii. 38, 47. Behold her now humble and mourning, in a quite different frame, form, and temper, than what before you might have beheld her among the crowds of lewd persons. *Zaccheus* the publican, behold he distributes his goods to the poor, and restores fourfold to those whom he had wronged by his former violence, he comes and waits as a disciple of *Jesus*, receives this new doctrine, and accepts the salvation, *Luke* xix. 8. There was a power that attended the preaching of *Christ*, whereby they were effectually persuaded to give up themselves to his conduct. *Matthew* forsakes the receipt of custom, where perhaps he got many an unjust penny, to follow our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and abandoned his gainful office. *Peter, Andrew, James, and John*, left their nets and fishing boats, and followed the Lord at his call. Those that were ignorant were made learned in the truths of God, in the law and gospel. The poor of the people received the gospel and divine grace, and sinners were converted, sanctified and saved. Sublime and saving truths were they taught by the Father, under the preaching of *Jesus* his Son. "For flesh and blood did not reveal these things to them, but my Father which is in heaven," says our Lord, *Matth.* xvi. 17. Now there were scarce any such instances at this time under the preaching of the *jewish* doctors, because the Lord seemed to have left them; and their hearers being trained up in a formal and customary round of ceremonies, which they took to be true religion, they went on in a blind hope of the favour of God, because they were *Abraham's* seed; but there were very few instances of conversion and regeneration under all their ministry.

3. Let us consider the effect that it had upon the enemies of *Christ*. It is evident that it convinced almost all of them inwardly, and many of them in their discourses with *Christ* were reduced to silence and shame; they had not one word to reply. They went away, not daring to ask him any more ensnaring questions, for their mouths were stopped, *Matth.* xxii. 46. The most impudent and the most learned of them fell together under his reproof, and the repetitions of the doctrines from his mouth they could not sustain.

Some of his enemies who heard his discourses had their tempers a little softened towards him; those that designed to apprehend him, and went with that design, were inwardly restrained from touching him. So the officers in my text. Others again rose into a violent rage and envy, that their corrupt doctrines and their evil deeds were brought to light, and exposed before the people, and they hated him with more rancour, and pursued him even to the death.

III. I proceed now in the last place to make some inferences for our instruction, and for our practice.

We will begin with lessons of instruction.

Lesson I. And the first is this, "that men may preach without commission from a national established church, and yet be owned of God." Such was the case of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in my text, and God discovered to the world how far he honoured him. *Christ* appeared like an upstart without a commission, for he was not sent forth from any of the schools of the prophets, or from under any of their public forms of teaching: Therefore they say concerning him, "as for this man we know not whence he is," *John* ix. 29. He was looked upon as a schismatic in those days, as a sort of separatist from the established church, and all those that followed him, were opposed

under that pretence. It was thought a sufficient refutation of his commission to preach; "Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees believed on him?" *John* vii. 48. But God sent a divine testimony into the hearts of those that heard him, and made them cry out, "never man spake like this man." It is no matter whence he comes, says the man, who felt his power opening his eyes, it is no matter whether he has authority from you, or no; for his miracles and his doctrine give sufficient attestation to his character, and his divine authority. When *Peter* and *John*, after the death of their master proceeded to publish the same doctrine which *Christ* had done, how were they railed at, and how furiously persecuted by the rulers of the *jewish* church: But God was with them, and by their ministry he converted thousands. Look into *Acts* iv. 17, 18. and following. "Let us, say the rulers of the *Jews*, let us straitly charge and threaten these men, that they speak to no man henceforth in this name." There were *Ananias* and *Caiaphas*, *John* and *Alexander*, kindred of the high priest, with the rulers, elders and scribes, as you find in the fifth verse; and they summoned these new preachers to appear before them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of *Jesus*; but *Peter* and *John* answered and said, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken to you more than to God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." verses 19, 20. We that have had in our own souls a rich and divine experience of the power of these doctrines, and of this gospel, which we preach; we have such a divine testimony to the truth of them, that we cannot but publish them, whether you command or forbid us. God owned them with power, when they had the private house shaken, where they were assembled together verse 31. "They were all filled with the holy Ghost, and all spake the word of God with boldness." Let us not therefore suffer ourselves to be imposed upon and terrified with the frightful name of schism, for our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and his apostles, had the same reproach. What if we do not worship according to the prescribed forms of those that are in power, yet if we worship according to the rules established by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, we can vindicate our consciences to him, and our consciences will not charge us another day, nor will our Lord reprove us. We have the example of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and his followers, let us keep close to this pattern, and not be afraid.

Lesson II. We may learn from hence "the distinguishing power of the Spirit of God when it accompanies his own word," that it reaches the hearts of some with powerful convictions, while others remain obstinate. Some say, he deceives the people, and some would have laid hands upon him, as in the verses before my text, but these officers were so struck with his doctrine, that they could not do it. The grace of God that attends his own word is sovereign, and delights with glory to distinguish itself amongst the hearers: Sometimes servants are convinced and wrought upon with mighty efficacy, when masters shall remain ignorant, and stupid, or be provoked to wrath and enmity against the preacher. The rich may blaspheme, while the poor receive the gospel. The rulers say, that he was a deceiver, but the officers, their servants, were satisfied there was something divine in his doctrine, "for never man spake like him."

There are some, it may be, that go to the place of public worship, and hear sermons, in order to revile the doctrine and the religion, and perhaps with a spiteful intent to do some mischief to those that publish it; but *Christ* shall over-rule them to gain good by the sermon, and turn their curse into blessing. These officers came probably with wrath in their hearts, and with a design to revile *Jesus*, and lay hands on him, according to their orders; but they were constrained to turn away from him
with

with innocent hands, and they fulfilled not their mischievous designs. There have been such examples in our days, when wicked men have come to blaspheme God and the gospel in his ministers, and to strike our Lord *Jesus Christ* through the sides of the pure professors of his faith and worship, and they go away believers; then is that glorious prophecy fulfilled. *Isai. lxxv. 1.* "I am found of them that sought me not." And blessed be God that such instances are found in our assemblies, wherein our Lord *Jesus Christ* makes his divine power appear, and attests his gospel, according to our ministrations of it.

Lesson III. I infer also from this text and discourse, that "when God resolves to work by his Spirit with his word, he breaks through all oppositions and prejudices of every kind, and constrains the hearers to confess, as well as believe." The divine conviction strikes like lightening through their hearts, and commands their lips to acknowledge the presence and power of God there.

Now I shall exemplify this head by considering the particular characters of these officers, and survey what difficulties, and what prejudices they laboured under, when they came first to put themselves under the preaching of *Christ*, and we shall find this inference eminently true.

They were educated under the *Jewish* priests, and doubtless they had their heads full of notions concerning a glorious *Messiah*, and they wished for nothing more, than to bear some considerable office in the kingdom of that *Messiah*, if he should appear in their day; and this is not at all strange, if we reflect that this was the very mistake and the temptation of *James* and *John*, who were two apostles. But when they heard *Christ* preach, they must probably fall under convictions of a different kind, and be sensible his kingdom was spiritual: For he wrought powerfully upon their spirits, and seemed to give them another turn of mind, they confessed and acknowledged though he was mean in his appearance, and his character in the world was contemptible, though he carried nothing of greatness and magnificence with him, he might be the true *Messiah*, for they were sure "never any man spoke like him."

Again, they were supposed to be enemies in their hearts to *Christ* before they came; but when God and his grace was with them by the mouth of his Son, they felt their error, they were forced to acknowledge it, and they became his friends; and instead of delivering him up to the fury of their rulers, they screened him from their rage and violence, and let him go in peace.

They were under the dictates and authority of the high priest and pharisees, and yet how glorious was the power and victory of the gospel over their spirits! They dared to disobey their lords and masters in this unrighteous command, to let go the man whom they sent for as a heinous criminal. As they were under a direct command to seize the Lord, so they were in danger of severe reproaches, and being turned out of their places, and perhaps of excommunication too, if they did not fulfil their orders: But the power which came with the word of *Christ* gave them courage, and they told their masters, they dared not seize such a man, a man that preached at that rate, "so as never man preached."

Now when they not only had the obstacles and prejudices of their own irregular notions founded upon a long course of education, but were enemies to *Christ* in their hearts, and were under authority to lay hold of him, yet the power of God, in the mouth of his Son, brought them to confess there was something extraordinary in him, and to tell their rulers so too. All this gave a noble testimony to the mission of *Christ*.

Such sort of witness God was pleased frequently to give to the gospel of his Son, in the lips of his apostles, and his inspired preachers, in primitive times. Men who have come into their assemblies, ignorant of the gospel, and disbelievers of *Christ*, have been convinced and judged by the words which they heard, "the secrets of their heart have been manifested, they have fallen down and worshipped God, and confessed that God was in the midst of them of a truth," see 1 *Cor.* xiv. 24, 25. Some appearances of this kind have been also seen in our day, and among our fathers in their public labours; and perhaps as many mighty prejudices, and as great obstacles have been broken through by the almighty power of the word of God, in the lips of his ministers, who derive not their authority from the state. Such instances give a divine testimony to the words of the gospel which are published, though the preachers are not commissioned by the national establishment. If God gives us his seal in such a powerful manner as this is, we will believe our authority is from God, and not question our commission.

Lesson IV. I infer, that the "first work of God upon the consciences of natural and carnal men, is very surprising to them."

The officers seemed to be under astonishment, and cried out, "Never man spake like this man." Perhaps they were never under a sermon before, where the Spirit of God attended it, or where their consciences were in any measure awakened. And thus it is in our days, when persons are under the first conviction of sin and righteousness by the preaching of the word, they confess they never heard such words before.

Though the matter and the manner of *Christ's* preaching was very different from that of the scribes, yet I take the biggest reason of the exclamation of these officers, to be the attending power of the Spirit working upon their consciences. So poor sinners, that have long sat under a formal and cold ministry, and attended twenty years or more upon it, because they were afraid to change their preacher, afraid of some terrible names of frightful reproach, and afraid lest they should change their worship to the name of schism, when they have ventured to go astray into some private worshipping assembly, and have heard a discourse whereby they have been awakened to see their sin, and their danger, and the way of salvation by the righteousness and the grace of *Christ*, they are brought as it were into a new world, they are amazed at what they see and feel, they say within themselves, "Is this the gospel of *Christ*? Then I never knew the gospel till this day." Such persons, under the first powerful impressions of God on their hearts, are so surprised, that sometimes they hardly know, whether it is the voice of God, or man; like *Samuel*, when he was first called to be a prophet, knew not the voice of God. They are amazed like the woman of *Samaria*, when she met with our Saviour, *John* iv. 29. "Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the *Christ*?" Under such an amazement have stupid and ignorant creatures fallen, when they have been first awakened to see the state of their own souls, and the salvation of the gospel in a powerful and converting light, that they have wondered at the preacher, as though he were some extraordinary person, when perhaps his talents were not uncommon; but the Spirit of God was with him, and commanded divine light to shine into the darkness of their souls, and at this they have been surprised, and been ready to cry out, "Never man spake like this man."

But I shall insist no longer on these heads, but proceed to some inferences for our practice.

Inference I.

Inference I. First, I would draw an inference that concerns ministers who have not commission from a national church, "that they should see to it that they have a call and a commission from God, and imitate our Lord *Jesus Christ* in the discharge of it." It is not my business here, my text does not naturally lead me to it, to enquire into all the particulars that make up the call and commission of a gospel-minister; but it is the business of each of us, when we are well satisfied in our call to the ministry, to imitate this glorious preacher *Christ Jesus*. Let us set before us his example, who had received no orders from the *jewish* priesthood, especially when we are among a people, who think we are not called to preach, because we have no ordination from an established church.

In general we should avoid those things in our ministry, wherein we may have just reason to fear others have been mistaken, and for which God hath contended with them, or departed from them. Not that we should seek after something novel, and out of the way, on purpose to avoid their method, or reject any thing in the course of our ministry, merely because they teach or practise it; this would be highly irrational and improper. But when we find their matter of discourse, or their method of ministration hath been unblest of God, or unsuccessful for the good of men, we have reason to see and enquire, whether there is not a more proper way of preaching to attain the great ends of the ministry, even the glory of God, the honour of *Christ*, and his gospel, with the conversion and salvation of poor sinful souls. This was the practice of the Son of God when he became a preacher among men, and let him be our pattern.

If others therefore in the matter of their ministrations, insisting much on the moral law, have given too narrow explications of it, and have not informed the people of the spiritual perfection of it, let us preach it up in the perfect purity of its demands, and in the severity of its threatenings; let us imitate our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and publish this holy law in its spirituality, and its terrors to awaken, convince and persuade men. If others have insisted most upon the ceremonies of worship, and established forms, and endeavoured to bind down the consciences of men to their inventions, or to the traditions of their fathers, which God never approved of, let us insist upon the command of God alone, and upon those rites and forms of worship only which he hath instituted: If others have preached up the sufficiency of baptismal washing, instead of regeneration by the holy Spirit, and led their hearers to a false presumption that they are born of God, because they have been baptized, let us follow the doctrine of the blessed *Jesus*, who requires every man to be born again, to be born of the holy Spirit, as well as of water, and to be made a new creature in heart as well as in life, in order to enter into the kingdom of God. If we have found that others have been cold and indolent in their ministrations, and have been greatly defective in their zeal for God, if they have had too little concern for the souls of men, and too great an indifferency for the salvation of perishing sinners, let us double our zeal, let us be more earnest in labouring to save sinful creatures, and to bring saints nearer to God, and to build them up in faith and holiness. If we should have reason to fear the Spirit of God is much departed from others, let us cry with great earnestness, that the Spirit may never leave our assemblies, and abandon us to labour in vain without his influences. Let us long for the presence of that Spirit in our secret studies, as well as in our public ministrations of the gospel, which alone can make a *Paul*, or an *Apollos*, to plant and water with success.

And

And this may be a way, not only to do more service to God, and do more good to the souls of men, but this may be a means, in the providence of God, to secure us from the rage of men too.

Let us remember, that when the chief priests, and rulers, and pharisees, sent to apprehend our Lord *Jesus*, for preaching such doctrine as he did without their commission, the officers who were sent, were impressed in their consciences with sudden convictions under his sermon, and they would not seize him. And God may give such instances of deliverance as divine attestations to our preaching, if we keep close to the example of our Lord *Jesus*, and have much of his Spirit with us.

Inference II. The next practical inference, is addressed to those who attend such ministers as have no commission from the established church: If ye have found spiritual edification from our labours, you may be encouraged to proceed. Such were many of the people who attended on the sermons of *Christ*, in the days of his flesh. They were sufficiently vindicated in this their following after him, not merely by the miracles that he wrought to prove his divine commission, but by the convincing, converting and sanctifying influence which accompanied his preaching. Let this appear in your whole conversation, in order to vindicate our ministry, and your attendance.

Was it said, even by the officers of the ecclesiastical court, concerning him, "Never man spake like this man," let it be said by all the world concerning you, "never men lived better than you do." Let it be acknowledged in the eyes even of all those that hate you, that the lives of none of them are comparable to your lives for strict holiness and religion. And this will give a conviction to the hearts of men, and go a great way to justify your preachers, and your attention to their sermons. This justified the officers to their own consciences, in their neglect to seize *Christ* the Lord, though they could not learnedly make out his commission: Nor could they give, it may be, a very rational account of the preference of *Christ* to their national and established preachers, yet they could say; we have felt something in our hearts from this man's preaching, that we never felt from the preaching of other men, therefore we could not seize him, we durst not apprehend him, we believe he hath something divine in him.

It may be, many of you know not how to argue upon the reasons of your separation, or non-conformity, but if you feel such inward evidence in your hearts, and if the evidence witnesses also in the holiness of your lives, and runs through all your conversation, if you have felt in the sermons of those that are not commissioned, some divine influences that you never felt elsewhere, then you will say, these are the servants of the most high God; and without any particular reflexions upon the public church, or the public way of worship, you will have abundant reason to keep close to those teachers where you have felt conviction and sanctification under the word.

When it shall be enquired, what do you more than others, let there be a fair and glorious answer ever at hand, that is legible in your lives by all mankind; let the grace of God in your heart, and abounding virtue and piety in your lives speak for you, that you attend upon men who do not preach as others do, and that you are made to live such lives as others do not live. Let your christian government of yourselves in sobriety, in temperance, in abstinence from the lusts of the flesh, in mortification to this world, and deadness to the vanities of this life, plead for you and for your preachers. Let it appear you are taught better than others by your living better than the rest of men, in faithful, just, and merciful behaviour towards your
neigh-

neighbours, in strict honour and honesty, in purity of life, in innocency and usefulness among your fellow-creatures. Let it appear that you bind yourselves to the rules of morality and piety, stronger than others do, even by the death of *Christ*, and the love of God in *Christ Jesus*, whose sacred name as a mediator, a ruler and a divine pattern, is ever dwelling on the lips of your preachers.

O never let it be said concerning you, that you are ready to cheat in your traffick, that you are apt to deal deceitfully in your merchandize, and you are prone to outwit others, and to undermine them in the management of your secular affairs. Never let it be charged upon any of you in your trades, that you skrew down the feller, and strain up the buyer, to extravagant and unreasonable prices for your covetous and exorbitant gain. But let all be open and generous, plain and simple, without fraud, and without extortion; such as may honour the gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and give a character of honour too, to that ministry upon which you attend, since it has not national and established ordinations and honours. Let your carriage towards God in your secret worship, and your public attendance upon divine ordinances, be of a piece with your conversation in the world; let it be known by the heavenly and holy temper of your spirits, that you are the sons of God, that your hearts are renewed, your souls are changed from what they were by nature, and your lives are gloriously different from the lives of others, and thereby give honour to the gospel that is preached among you.

This will enable you to bear the reproaches of schism and separation from a national church; but how can you bear them, if you have not something that carries you above these reproaches? Can you be content to be as loose, as vain, as careless in your manners towards God, and towards your neighbour, as others are, and yet to give yourselves all the trouble of separation from them in worship, and bear the reproaches of this separation? This is not acting wisely, it will not quit cost; here you run a certain risque, and yet you lose all the profit you might hope for. If therefore you chuse to attend upon such a ministry as has not the public commission, let it be said concerning you, "no men live like these men;" that even those that avoid and fly from your assemblies, and who never have heard your ministers, may yet be able to infer from your lives, that "other men speak not as these men speak." Amen.

D I S C O U R S E II.

A sermon preached at the separation of two
deacons to their office.

I T I M. iii. 13.

For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

AS there is a divine order in the invisible church, and the whole management of that large spiritual family is conducted by rules of divine wisdom, so the Lord hath appointed a beautiful order in his visible church; and in his book he hath given us the pattern of his house, and the manner of the officers and ordinances thereof; at least the biggest lines of it are drawn fair and plain, though some of the lesser circumstances may be more obscurely expressed. By a due study of the scriptures, and the exercise of our common reason, we may find a rule to guide us, in the most considerable and necessary affairs that belong to the constitution and regulation of the house of God.

Christ himself, the Son of God, dwelling in flesh is the head, the chief shepherd and overseer of all his visible church upon earth; for he wears a visible body, though for a season he be departed from our sight, and dwells in heaven; thither he ascended to "receive the promise of the Spirit, and to bestow gifts upon men," *Acts* ii. 23. and *Eph.* iv. 8, 11. By these gifts he furnished persons, and fitted them to sustain offices of an ordinary or an extraordinary character.

The extraordinary officers were apostles and prophets, and some suppose evangelists also, these were to continue only for a season; the ordinary are pastors and teachers, elders and deacons, which are to continue through all ages of the church.

To omit all the disputes that have been raised how far pastors, teachers, elders and bishops or overseers differ from one another, I shall at present consider all the ordinary church officers, as included under these two names, bishops and deacons. For thus the apostle seems to include them, *Phil.* i. 1. The visible church of *Christ* on earth is composed of spirits dwelling in flesh, and as the bishops or overseers chiefly exercise their care toward the soul or spiritual part, so the chief care of the
deacons

deacons seems to relate to the body, and things belonging to it: And as there are some special persons in the church, to whose outward welfare the care of the deacon must be extended, so the whole church, considered as a society meeting together for worship, will need some conveniencies for the outward performance of that worship, which seems to be another part of the deacon's business. But I proceed to pursue my discourse according to the text, whereby this will appear with more evidence.

There are these three things contained in the words.

I. The office itself.

II. The due discharge, or performance of it, and

III. The encouragement, or reward.

I. First, the office itself. Under which we shall consider four things, viz. The business of it; the reason of it's institution; the duration of it; and the ordinary method of investing a person with it.

i. The business of a deacon is expressed very briefly in *Acts* vi. 2. "To serve tables," or to manage affairs that relate to the provision for the table of the poor, to which are added in the general construction of the words, the table of the ministers, and the table of the church at the Lord's supper.

The poor oftentimes make a considerable part in christian churches. In the beginning the poor received the gospel. And thus it is still, "not many rich, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom." *1 Cor.* i. 26, 28. and *James* ii. 5. Now as it is the duty of the rest of the church, and especially of the rich, to communicate toward the supply of the wants of their poor brethren, so it is the proper business of the deacons to receive and to distribute these supplies; and no doubt but it is their duty to excite and exhort those whom they see negligent, and to urge them to the performance of these works of love and piety.

The table, or outward support of the ministers, ought to be provided by the church also. *1 Cor.* ix. from the 4. to the 14. verse. "The Lord hath ordained, that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel." And it seems very convenient, that one or more persons should be deputed to see this performed, that so the ministers may not be too much exposed to a solicitude about outward things, nor their cares too much laid out upon the necessaries of the life of their bodies, while they should rather be devoted, or entirely given up to the word of God and prayer, for the service of souls.

Besides, if the ministers of the church were forced to expect and receive the several portions of their maintenance from the several persons of the church, their own collection of it would take up too much of their time, would expose them to the censure of covetousness and greediness, would too much impose upon their modesty, or would make their maintenance fall short.

And I might add also their subsistence, which is but an act of justice due from the church, would look too much like mere charity, and appear too precarious and dependent; and their obligations to particular private persons, would too much expose them to the temptation of partiality, in the exercises of their ministrations, and in their pastoral care. Whereas this is forbidden to ministers, *1 Tim.* v. 21. "Do nothing by partiality." We might be more afraid to reprove some that were rich and kind, and more negligent in comforting and instructing others that were poor, and could give but little. But when the minister receives his support from the church

in general, by the hand of the deacons, as officers of the church, then he is much more secured from these temptations. And no doubt it is the duty of the deacons to see to it, that each member of the church perform their part toward the support of the ministry; for it hardly seems decent for the minister himself to urge this duty on the people*.

The table of the church at the Lord's supper, is maintained by the contributions of the church. The bread and wine must be bought at the public expence, but particularly provided for by the deacons, who in short are stewards of all the temporal affairs that relate to the church, even as the bishops and elders are of the spiritual; and both under our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is the great pastor of pastors, and churches, and the feeder of his own poor, and provides all things for all.

I might add to these, that the business of a deacon seems also to extend to some care of the place of public worship, and all the necessaries that belong to the outward service of the Lord, such as tables, seats, vessels for bread and wine, and for water in baptism, &c. For though these things are not particularly expressed among the businesses of a deacon, yet they will never be performed, unless some one or more persons be deputed for this service; and who can be more proper persons than those, who by divine institution are intrusted with the contributions of the church. Yet in most of these affairs it is necessary to advise with the pastor, and with the whole church, and in every important matter to take their direction; for the deacons are but stewards, and not proprietors or possessors of the church's treasure, nor are they lords of the temporal things relating to the church.

ii. The reason of their institution, which is to assist the ministers or elders of the church in the care of all those things, which if devolved entirely upon the elders, would hinder them from their proper business, viz. "the word and prayer." The apostles, who were the elders and rulers of the church at *Jerusalem* at that season, managed the affairs of collection and distribution at first. *Acts* iv. 35. "The disciples brought the money and laid it down at the apostles feet, and there was a distribution to every one according to their need." But, *Acts* vi. 1, 2. "When the disciples were multiplied," the elders could not take care of all the poor; therefore the order of deacons was instituted in the next verse; and we find in *Acts* xi. 30. That the elders, or ministers, were not utterly divested of all power or care of the contributions, for *Paul* and *Barnabas* themselves received the contributions of the church at *Antioch*, to be disposed of to the poor saints in *Judea*: And *Acts* xii. 25. "*Barnabas* and *Saul* are said to return from *Jerusalem*, having fulfilled this service, τὴν διακονίαν, this work of a deacon," as it is in the original. So that as the ruling elders probably are helps in government, as the teachers are helps in doctrine and catechising, so the deacons are helps to the pastor in the management of all the outward and temporal affairs that relate to the church's welfare. Now if these things are so, the following consequences will arise.

1. That in churches which are very small, there is no absolute necessity of such officers, as ruling elders or deacons? for the pastor may perform all the services necessary in that church, with some very little assistance from the brethren, at such special occasions, wherein his own modesty may excuse him, or his other labours prevent him. It is plain the deacons were not chosen, till disciples were multiplied.

2. As

* There is a very good discourse on this subject, viz. "the maintenance of a christian ministry," published by Mr. David Ross.

2. As pastors and ruling elders are not utterly divested of the care of the poor by the institution of deacons, so the deacons ought not to determine any thing of considerable importance, without consulting the elders, as I have hinted before; nor in affairs of this kind of the biggest moment, ought any thing to be determined by elders and deacons, without the cognizance and approbation of the church, for in these temporal things we are all but stewards of what the church intrusts us with.

3. Hence perhaps we may borrow another argument for the extent of the deacon's care, that is, that it reaches to all those things of a temporal nature, wherein the brethren of the church may help the elders; for this is the very design of the deacon's office, lest the elders, or ministers of the church, might be too much interrupted in their continual attendance on the word and prayer; and especially where there are no ruling elders chosen to assist the pastor or teacher, in managing church affairs, the care of the deacons seems still to be more extensive for the help of the pastor. And perhaps the word helps, *1 Cor. xii. 28.* may have some reference to these offices of ruling elders and deacons.

iii. The duration of this office. Doubtless it was designed to continue throughout all ages of the church, which appears from these two reasons:

Reason I. The objects of their care always continue. "The poor ye have always with you." *John xii. 8.* And ye shall always have them to exercise your charity and compassion. *Deut. xv. 11.* And in large churches the temporal affairs thereof will be too heavy a burden for the ministers to sustain, and therefore they will need the assistance of deacons. Besides, the provision for their own support, and for the table of the Lord, will be always necessary, while we minister before the Lord in garments of flesh, and while the table of Lord must be furnished with bread and wine, and other necessaries, in order to participate thereof.

Reason II. They are mentioned by the apostle *Paul*, as stated officers of the churches, and directions given concerning their character, their behaviour and management, as there is concerning other standing officers and affairs of a church.

It may be added also, that if they were thought necessary to the primitive churches, in the age of miracles, and the age of love, when God took special care of his ministers, and excited all the members of a church, to a mutual care of one another, and of the poor, much more necessary are these officers in all the following ages, when ministers must acquire and improve their gifts by hard study, and cannot maintain themselves by the work of their hands, and when the charity and mutual care of church members waxes cold, and need some persons to be appointed for this very business.

iv. The way of their constitution, or how persons are to be invested with this office; which seems to be performed by these five things.

1. By enquiring amongst the members of the church, who come nearest to the characters that are given of a deacon, *Acts vi. 3.* "Men of honest report, full of the Spirit, and of wisdom." *1 Tim. iii. 8.* "Grave, not double-tongued, not given to wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Unto these I might add, that prudence will direct us to chuse such persons who are not very poor, lest the stewardship of the churches money should be a temptation to them. Not mean or despised in the church, lest they want due courage and sufficient influence upon their brethren for the management of their office. And they should be persons capable of admonishing the rich, and of comforting the poor, even as their business is to converse with both, to receive from the one, and distribute to the other.

They should also be persons whose temper is compassionate, and who have as it were a natural care for the good of the church, and such as have some leisure hours, and who are not so overwhelmed with the cares and constant business of this life, but they may now and then devote their thoughts, and their hours, to the service of the church of *Christ*.

2. They must be proved before they are fixed in this office, *1 Tim.* iii. 10. I do not conceive this to intend their management of the deacon's office, by way of experiment for a year or two; but rather a farther character of the persons chosen. Let them be such as are of some considerable standing in christianity, whose character and conversation has been proved and found blameless, and fit for such an office. It seems to signify the same with that character of a bishop, verse 6. "That he must not be a novice," that is, not one that is lately converted, or lately received into the christian church.

3. They must be chosen by the church, *Acts* vi. 3. "Brethren, look ye out among you seven men," &c. The pastors, or elders, must not chuse them without the church, for the apostles themselves, who were inspired, would not determine the persons, but left the church to chuse them, to shew us the stated method of chusing ordinary officers in a church.

4. They must accept of the call of the church, and that freely, and they must solemnly devote themselves to the service of *Christ* and the church. For all the subjects and servants of *Christ* in his visible kingdom must be voluntary, and the office of a deacon must be undertaken "willingly, and not by constraint," even as the office of a bishop, *1 Pet.* v. 2.

5. They must be devoted and separated to this work by the solemn prayers of the church, and seeking the divine benediction upon them in the discharge of their office. So were *Paul* and *Barnabas* separated to the work of the ministry amongst the gentiles, *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. And so the deacons to their office. *Acts* vi. 6.

Here note, that the elder, or elders of the church, ministers and teachers, are to be the chief agents in this affair. So you find the apostles and teachers were the chief agents in the two texts just cited: And as ministers may pronounce a benediction, or blessing in the name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, so perhaps here it may be proper for the minister to pronounce them blessed, if they faithfully perform this office, as well as to pray for a divine blessing upon them.

The great dispute and enquiry, whether imposition of the hands of elders in this benediction, is now necessary, as in the primitive times, may be thus resolved: In many scriptures, where imposition of hands is mentioned, there were extraordinary and miraculous gifts conferred: You find this in *Stephen* and *Philip*, two of the first deacons, and you frequently find the holy Ghost conferred on men by this ceremony, *Acts* viii. 17, 18. and chapter ix. 17 — 19. Nor can I find one plain and certain instance of hands imposed in the primitive churches, where we are sure it was but an ordinary separation to an office without any extraordinary gifts conferred, or an inspired and effectual benediction given by an inspired person. Therefore I cannot conceive it necessary to be now practised; for if it had been necessary, surely there would have been some more certain direction and command for it.

But since there is so much colour given to it by some examples or expressions in scripture, where we cannot certainly prove that extraordinary gifts were conferred, we leave every church, and every elder, to their own liberty, of opinion and practice; and those that will impose hands in such a way of benediction, upon any chosen

sen officers in a church, shall never be censured by me, nor dare I pronounce it idle or unlawful. Yet still I think, if there be any elder or elders, in that particular congregation to which they belong, these are the most proper persons to perform such a ceremony.

I would add here, that as there were many sorts of consecration of old in *jewish* times, by washings, sprinklings, water, fire, &c. In the new testament things are said to "be sanctified by the word and prayer," *1 Tim. iv. 5.* And therefore some useful instructions and exhortations from the word of God, seem very proper at the consecration of a bishop, or of a deacon, as well as prayer.

Let us proceed to the

II. Second thing expressed in the text; that is, to shew how the persons ordained may attain to a good performance of this office, of a deacon. Then a man uses the office of a deacon well, when,

1. He does it with sincere design for the honour of God, and zeal for the good of the church. This single eye, this sincere aim, ought to attend every action of a christian, and especially every part of the practice of a church officer, whose business has a more direct design of this end, and should have a more immediate and manifest tendency toward it. Simplicity and godly sincerity should run through the whole course of services in a church, without fleshly wisdom and carnal interests.

2. With diligence and care: When *Artaxerxes* the king gave command to the treasurers of his state, which are much the same as deacons in a church, to assist *Ezra* the priest in building the temple, he charges them, "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven," *Ezra vii. 23.* Let this be a reproof to each of us, when we are negligent about any thing in the church of God.

Deacons should not only supply those wants that are made known to them, but be careful in enquiring into the necessities of the church, whether such persons may not want relief, who are too modest to burden the church, or ask support of the public. Whether *Onesiphorus* was a deacon or no, is not certain, but he fulfilled the office of a deacon, *diaconos*, both in *Ephesus* and at *Rome*, when "he sought out *Paul* diligently, and often refreshed him, and ministered unto him in many things," *2 Tim. i. 16—18.*

The number of deacons is not determined in scripture, but so many ought to be chosen, whose due diligence, according to their circumstances, may answer the necessities of the church, without being overburdened themselves.

3. The office of a deacon must be performed with prudence and discretion: Distinguishing who are poor indeed from those who are covetous and pretendedly poor; "that the church be not charged more than is necessary," *1 Tim. v. 16.*

4. With faithfulness to the church and to the poor, and to the ministry: For in all cases "it is required of stewards that they be faithful," *1 Cor. iv. 2.* Distributing the contributions for the several services of the church, according to the design for which it is given by the church, is their duty.

5. Without partiality. Not neglecting any part of their office, or the service of any of the tables to which they are called, but laying by all carnal respect, *1 Tim. v. 21.* Distributing to the poor, according to the degree of their poverties and necessities, whether these be constant or occasional: And this must be done with an im-

partial

partial view, without preferring one before another, upon any selfish or carnal considerations.

6. With cheerfulness, and not grudgingly, *Rom. xii. 8.* "He that sheweth mercy, let him do it with cheerfulness, he that ruleth with diligence;" which words seem to be spoken concerning the deacons and elders of a church. They ought not to be lavish of the church's money, nor ought they to be fond of saving, and too thrifty, lest the poor be grieved, and the church dishonoured by the hardships which any of their members suffer.

7. With gentleness and compassion. Treating the poor kindly, in imitation of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who condescended to the meanest, and pitied the poor: His servants they are, his deacons, and he expects they should take tender care of his members, not using them roughly, nor speaking hard things to them, lest their spirits be broken.

8. I cannot but think that occasional instructions, admonitions, consolations and prayers, with, and for the poor, ought to accompany the performance of a deacon's office; for these things are in some measure the duty of every christian, as it is frequently intimated by *St. Paul*; and much more surely of those who bear an office in the church, and who are called to a more particular acquaintance with the state of it, and converse with the members of it; and especially when it is a piece of their character, that "they must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience;" that is, they must be men of a good acquaintance with the great truths of the gospel, and of an unblemished character for sincerity and piety.

It is certain, that as they are intrusted with the temporalities of the church, and know when there are any deficiencies with regard to the table of the minister, or the poor, it is their duty to admonish the members, and especially the rich among them to do their part toward the supply of their wants.

It may be observed, that the first deacons had extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and were eminently furnished for such work, as exhortation and prayer. *Philip* and *Stephen*, who were two of the first seven deacons of the church at *Jerusalem*, were preachers of the gospel. Compare *Acts vi. 5.* with verses 9, 10. and *Acts viii. 5.* And in the account which *St. Paul* gives us of deacons in my text, all of them have such an honourable encouragement of arriving at higher degrees in the church, as gives us reason to suppose they were sometimes employed in some ministerial services relating to the spiritual state of the poor, as well as their temporal necessities.

And yet it must be still granted, that the original design of the institution of deacons, was to assist the pastors in the ministrations to the necessities of the poor, and distribution of the moneys which were collected for this purpose, and not to preach the gospel publicly, though the first deacons having extraordinary gifts, were often so employed.

III. The third thing, in the text, is the encouragement given to the due performance of a deacon's office. It is said by the apostle, "they purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in *Christ Jesus*."

"The late reverend and learned doctor *Owen* believes this *καλοβαθυος*, or good degree and confidence in the faith, to signify no more, but a place or seat of some eminency in the church assemblies, which is due unto such deacons, where with boldness and confidence they may assist in the management of those affairs of the church which belong unto the profession of the faith which is in *Christ Jesus*;" but

but he adds, " If any shall rather think, that both of these expressions do signify an increase in gifts and grace, which is a certain consequence of men's faithful discharge of their office in the church wherein many deacons of old were eminent unto martyrdom, I shall not contend against it." Others think that *καλὸ βιβμὸς*, or good degree, signifies the office of the presbytery, which they obtain by a due performance of the office of a deacon.

If I might give my conjecture, I would explain it these two ways.

1. They obtain a good degree of honour and respect from the elders, for the assistance which they give them in church affairs; from the poor, for their compassion and tenderness toward them, and supply of their wants; and from the whole church, for their fidelity, wisdom and diligence in the management of all the temporal affairs that relate to the church, for the honour of the gospel, and conveniency of the members.

2. By conversing much with the elders of the church, by acting in concert with them, by visiting the poor, and performing private christian services towards them such as exhortation, consolation, and prayer, and by a constant acquaintance and observation of church affairs, they acquire greater knowledge, they improve their gifts and their graces, they grow bold to speak of the faith of *Christ* more publicly, and have taken a good degree, or a good step, towards the office of a ruling, or a teaching elder, in the church.

And this is a very proper expression concerning those times, when christian churches were the only schools for the education of ministers; and the exercise of gifts, in and for the service of the church, was one chief means of their preparation for it. I confess in our day, since we have many outward advantages for the education of ministers in learning, and their improvement in knowledge, and in all gifts, it is not so usual, nor so necessary, that a deacon should grow up into an elder, or bishop. Yet in some churches, such persons have been found in late-years, who have been deservedly called to the office of the ministry, by the great improvement of their gifts in the church, their uncommon degree of knowledge and grace, and the peculiar blessing of God.

After all, this is certain, that those that grow old in such an office, well performed, grow honourable in the sight of God and man; for " God is not unrighteous, my friends, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name; in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister, and we desire that every one of you would shew the same diligence unto the end," *Heb. vi.* 10—12.

I N F E R E N C E S.

I. We may see something of the beauty of gospel-order, in the several offices of a church of *Christ*; but I shall now remark it only in these two respects, 1. That as the visible church here on earth, and the members of it, have many bodily necessities and conveniencies to be supplied, as well as their souls to be instructed and edified; so there are distinct persons of divine appointment commissioned to manage these affairs, and fulfil these services, viz. pastors and deacons. 2. Another part of the beauty of that order consists herein, that the one is to act in subordination to the other; the deacons are chosen for the assistance of the elders, and thus acting together by a sweet concurrence, the church is preserved in peace, the necessities of it are supplied, and the gospel honoured.

II. See

II. See here the tenderness of *Christ*, the great head of the church towards his ministers, and his poor: He has instituted officers to take care of their outward subsistence, as well as required the church to contribute for that end. Hereby the poor will not be left to perish, nor ought they to be exposed to extreme hardships, if the church can prevent it: Hereby ministers are secured from a too great solicitude about their own maintenance, and from interruptions in their more proper work, as well as from the malicious censures of the world, which would fall upon them, if they were overburdened with secular cares and concerns, either for the church, for the poor, or for themselves.

III. Learn from my text, that the services which are done for *Christ* and the church, have their rewards annexed to them for their encouragement in this world, besides the infinite recompence of reward in the world to come. Faithful deacons in a church, obtain a good degree of honour and esteem.

IV. From the deacons of a particular visible church, we may raise our thoughts unto our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is the great minister, and bishop of souls; and I may call him too, the great and universal deacon of God the Father in the church invisible. The Father has given into his hand the riches of his grace, the treasures of his love, divine food and spiritual clothing, mansions of glory and inheritances in light; to be distributed amongst his poor saints, that they may be nourished and brought through this wilderness, and that they may be enriched with grace, be brought home to heaven, and be for ever blessed. He is diligent and faithful, he is wise, and gentle, and compassionate, and answers all the characters of a deacon in the highest degree. He spreads a table for starving sinners, and furnishes it with his own flesh and blood; he feeds us with the bread of life, and with living water, that we may eat, and drink, and live for ever.

And in this sense, when the deacons are serving tables, and supplying the wants of the poor, and the church visible, out of what is trusted with them; let them remember and rejoice, that they represent the character of our Lord *Jesus*, as he is intrusted with all supplies from the hands of the Father, and distributing unto the church invisible. To him let the eyes of your faith be lifted for wisdom, for gifts and grace, to manage the affairs with which you are intrusted, and he shall fulfil the promises of a large reward. Amen.

D I S-

D I S C O U R S E III.

Invitations to church-fellowship.

P S A L M lxxv. 4.

Blessed is the man whom thou chusest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

THE latter words of the verse shall be the subject of our present meditations, wherein we shall consider what is meant by “dwelling in the courts of God, and what is the goodness of his house wherewith his favourites shall be satisfied.” There are three senses of this sacred phrase, “dwelling in the courts of God;” and the persons who are favoured to inhabit the sanctuary in either of these senses, may have the blessing of the *Psalms* pronounced upon them.

The first, and the most obvious meaning of the words, “dwelling in the courts of God,” is, “a continual attendance on him in the ministrations of his temple, and the discharge of some holy office there.” This was the felicity of several of the priests and the *levites* of old under the *jewish* dispensation: And this is the happiness of the ministers of the gospel now, who are continually employed in the things of God, and the affairs of religion; who give themselves up, as the apostles did, “to the ministry of the word and prayer,” *Acts* vi. 4. Whose business it is to “attend to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine,” to meditate on God and *Christ* and salvation, to converse with the glorious invisibles of the upper world, and “give themselves wholly to them,” as the apostle charges *Timothy* the young evangelist, *1 Tim.* iv. 13, 15. Blessed is the man whom God chooses for a christian and a minister, whose general calling, in common with the rest of christians, is to save his own soul, and whose particular employment as a minister is to save the souls of others. This order of men are utterly unworthy of their privilege, if they do not prize it highly, set a just value upon it, and confess their own happiness.

But I have shewn elsewhere*, that this sense of the words, which is limited to priests and *levites*, could never include the whole meaning of *David*; for then he had

Vol. VI.

R

had

* See volume the first, page 122.

had excluded himself from this blessedness, who was not of the tribe of *Levi*, nor capable of priesthood; and yet he declares with holy joy, that he "would dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," *Psal.* xxiii. 6.

The second sense of the words therefore, and which seems to be the very design of the *Psalmist* is this: Blessed are they "whose habitation is near to the ark of God, and the tabernacle," and thereby "they are made capable of frequenting the house of God, and of waiting upon him with great constancy in the holy ordinances of his worship." These are the persons whom my text pronounces happy: There was but one tabernacle, and one ark in the days of *David*, and but one temple in succeeding ages appointed for all the inhabitants of the land of *Canaan*; but one place where God had recorded his name, and appointed the public sacrifices, and peculiar solemnities of worship, on which all the men of *Israel*, who lived at the farthest distance, were obliged to attend three times a year: But those whose habitation was near the place where the ark resided, and these solemnities were performed, had more frequent opportunities of such attendance.

The doctrine, which we may derive from this sense of the words, may be thus expressed. — "Happy are those persons whose circumstances and stations of life, are appointed by providence in so favourable a manner, as to give them liberty to come up constantly to the house of God, and wait upon him in all his institutions:" And the instances of their happiness are evident enough. For

Instance I. "These are nearer to the visits of God, and may see him oftener than others." These may have such a frequent sight of his "power and glory, as they are to be seen in the sanctuary," *Psal.* lxiii. 2. It is a pleasure to be near our best friend, to be near our dearest Father, to be near our own God. When we have a relation dwells near us, how often we are present with them! And they that dwell near the court, have opportunity of seeing the king upon every occasion,

Instance II. "These have more external helps towards heaven, than others have." It is true, we have a glorious mercy in this respect, that the scriptures are every where in our hands, and many labours of holy men in writing, who being dead, yet speak; but the ministry of the word in the house of God, is the great ordinance for conversion and edification. It is the chief standing institution of *Christ* for this purpose, even to the end of the world.

Instance III. "These persons have supplies of their wants nearer at hand, and whatsoever their burdens be, they are nearer to relief;" whether their complaints are of a spiritual or temporal kind. How often has the soul that was in the dark and perplexed, received hints of direction in the ministry of the word! How often has the tempted christian been strengthened and supported there! And the mourning saint has been often comforted. And even when we labour under temporal necessities and sorrows, though the sanctuary is not furnished to supply every thing of this kind, yet the words of grace and consolation that have been heard in the church, have often born up the spirit of the poor and the afflicted; they have been led to the mercy-seat, the spring of all supplies, and they have gone away patient under their burdens, and rejoicing in hope of deliverance here, or full salvation hereafter. We in this world are travelling through a wilderness, a dry land: Now to be near a sweet fountain, or rather to have a sweet stream flowing by us all the way, is a choice comfort; while those that are afar off die for thirst, or go many a long hour without supply. See *Psal.* lxiii. 1, 2. where *David* being afar off from the house of God, cries out aloud after him. "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for

for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power, and thy glory," &c.

Happy those who dwell near the celebration of divine ordinances, for these are the persons who stand fair to obtain all advantages of the house of God, and "to be satisfied with the goodness of his holy temple."

Before I dismiss this second sense of the words, I shall make these two or three reflexions.

Reflexion I. "How much do these fellow-creatures want our pity, and our prayers, whose station places them afar off from the courts of God," and who are deprived of all the blessed advantages that are to be enjoyed in the church! Let us, whom divine providence has favoured with a nearer approach to God, fill his courts with the voice of joy and praise for our peculiar mercies; and let our hearts at the same time feel a becoming compassion towards those who are afar off. O pity those who dwell in the lands of darkness and heathenism, and have nothing near them that looks like religion, but the courts of idolatry, and their abominable rites and ceremonies; filthy ceremonies, and fantastic or cruel rites with which they worship images of wood or stone, and their brazen or their golden gods. Pity the wretches who dwell under antichristian tyranny, where every thing sacred is over-run with superstition, and the pure ordinances of the gospel are daubed over so thick with various painting, and so buried under a load of human inventions, as to diminish, if not utterly destroy, all their use and power. Pity the protestants whose places of worship are demolished, and the sanctuaries are thrown down all over their land. Pity the holy confessors that are banished from the courts of God, and his beloved worship; and those who are shut up in prisons, inclosed in dungeons, under heavy bonds of iron; and those also who groan in secret in their own houses, under the terror of watchful and malicious persecutors. Let us put our souls in their soul's stead, and say then, "Would we not think ourselves fit objects for pity? And should we not desire the prayers of the saints of God?" Think then, christians, let you and I think with ourselves, who made the dreadful and the happy difference? Happy for us indeed, but dreadful for our brethren, who endure these banishments, or heavy bonds!

Reflexion II. Here let us reflect again, "how much more excellent is the gospel-state, than that of the *levitical* law! And how much more happy are christians in *England*, than the *Jews* in *Canaan*! Here we have houses of God near us, churches assembling in every town. They were forced to travel three times a year to *Jerusalem*, many long and weary miles: It is true God refreshed them in their journies, *Psal.* lxxxiv. 5—7. He gave them showers of rain when they were faint or thirsty; but they travelled through *Baca*, that is, the valley of weeping; many wants and inconveniencies attended them, and the difficulties and burdens of such a dispensation, were not light nor little.

We may yet continue this reflexion, concerning those who dwell in this great city, and say, "How great is the privilege the christians in *London* enjoy, above those who dwell in distant villages, or in little solitary cottages in the country!" Here we have the gospel preached in every street, and places of worship at our right hand, and our left: We dwell, as it were, in the courts of God; but the poor villager must travel many a mile, and perhaps through miry ways, to attend on the nearest ministrations of the word; and in the mean time the young and the feeble of the family must be confined at home. O what advances in knowledge and grace, what growth in holiness, and what approaches to heaven are to be expected from those who

dwell so near the places of divine worship, and where the provisions of heaven are brought to our very doors!

“O how desirable a thing it is to enjoy all such circumstances of life, as give us liberty to frequent the courts of God!” How much should we value, and how wisely should we improve such a blessing! Have a care of neglecting due seasons of worship, and be not negligent or infrequent in your visits to the courts of God, lest he lay some heavy restraints upon you, and divide you from his sanctuary. He has bands and chains of various kinds to cast upon such slothful professors; persecution or sickness, loss of your limbs, or loss of your senses, whereby you may be cut off from the blessings of his church; or he may break up house and remove far from you, because you do not visit him; or he may place your tabernacle afar off from his own, and cut short your liberty; for it is he which “determines the bounds of your habitations,” *Acts* xvii. 26.

O how unhappily are some persons overloaded with the cares of this life! How are they hurried and overwhelmed in a tumult of worldly affairs! And the business of their daily calling is too often ready to entrench upon divine hours and ordinances. How sore a distress is it to a pious christian to be confined and withheld from the courts of God, by long and tedious distempers of body! How painful is it to his spirit to lie languishing and faint on a bed of sickness, while others are made to drink of the river of pleasure, and refreshing streams of the sanctuary! They are sorrowful, while others are made joyful in the house of prayer. They are tasting the wormwood and the gall, while we feed on the pleasant things of “the house of God, and are satisfied with the goodness of his holy temple.”

And thus I dismiss the second sense of the words, which probably was the precise meaning and chief design of the *Psalmist* himself, considering the dispensation under which he lived.

But when in the times of the new testament, we apply the language of the *jewish* prophets to the state and institutions of the gospel, we have encouragement enough from the example of *Christ* and his apostles, to extend and further enlarge the meaning of those antient phrases beyond the literal and *jewish* sense, and thus accommodate them to christian affairs.

The third sense of the text therefore, when enlarged and explained to evangelical purposes, may be this.

Approaching to God, in the style of the gospel signifies, either our being brought nigh to God, and reconciled to him by the blood of *Christ*, and the grace of the holy Spirit, as in *Eph.* ii. 13, 18. “In *Christ* Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh,—and have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Or else it means our drawing nigh to God in spirit and in truth; in prayer or holy meditation, &c. So *Heb.* x. 21, 22. “Having such a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart.”

Dwelling in the courts of God, may signify an union to the church of God, which is his spiritual house, upon a solemn profession of his gospel, and a visible allowed right to all the privileges and ordinances thereof. The church is the “house of the living God,” *1 Tim.* iii. 15. He dwells no longer in temples made with hands, nor confines his special presence to any single spot of ground, or any material building: The assemblies of his saints are his courts, his dwelling places; “where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is *Christ* in the midst of them,” *Matth.* xviii. 20. Every particular church of *Christ*, as well the church catholic,

or

or universal, is a "holy temple of the Lord, built up for a habitation of God through the Spirit," *Ephes. ii. 20, 21.*

Now surely, if the men of *Israel* had a blessing pronounced upon them in my text, whose habitation was near to that material sanctuary, we may with equal assurance, and with much greater delight say, "Blessed is the man, O Lord, whom thou chusest and causest to draw near unto thee, that he may dwell in thy house in the sense of the new testament; that he may be added to thy church," *Acts ii. 47.* That "he may be joined to the disciples," *Acts ix. 26.* That he may "be received in the Lord" *Phil. ii. 29.* That he may be united to the christian assemblies, and become a member of the church of *Christ.*

Let us again consider the *hebrew* expression, חוֹרֵךְ אֵשֶׁן, "that he may dwell in thy courts," which may with more exactness and propriety be rendered, "he shall or will dwell," &c. and then the verse will sound thus, "Blessed is the man whom thou chusest, and causest to approach unto thee; he shall dwell in thy courts," as a promised privilege; or he will do it as a voluntary and delightful practice; in which latter sense, the words will afford this doctrine.

Doctrine. "He that is caused in a spiritual manner to approach or draw near to God, will have a desire to dwell in the house of God, that is, to be united to his church."

He who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is brought near to God by the atoning blood of *Christ*, and the sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit, will desire to be a visible fellow-citizen with the saints, and to become one of the household. He who has frequented the courts of God, attending on the worship of the church, and has felt the special presence of God there, convincing, converting, and comforting his soul, will be glad to dwell there, and to join himself to the church, as a part or member of it, and that for these reasons following.

Reason I. "Because he finds so much delight in approaching near to God, that he desires still to be nearer." He feels that nearness to God is happiness; and he cannot have too much of that; he cannot be too near his chief good, and his soul's delight. When he has come up to the house of God, and only paid a visit there, he has tasted so much sweetness in this visit, that he cannot satisfy himself to be a mere visitant, where he may be an inhabitant; he would dwell where God dwells, and be always with him.

God himself, in infinite condescension, makes a visit to families, and to closets, where prayer is performed, and comforts praying souls. But God dwells in *Zion*, "this is his rest for ever, for he has desired it," *Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14.* Therefore holy souls would dwell there also. *David* would have the ark brought to *Zion*, that he might dwell with God: And he often longed to "dwell in God's house," *Psal. xxvii. 4.* *Peter* was near God on the holy mount, and he was immediately for "making tabernacles," and dwelling there, *Luke ix. 33.*

He that has drawn near to God in worship, enjoys so much pleasure in common ordinances, that he breathes after special ones: With God's invitations he is pleased, and persuaded to come, and he would fain taste the entertainment. When *Christ* by his messengers speaks in general to mankind, he finds a sweetness in the voice, he longs therefore to have *Christ* speak particularly to him as a believer and a friend. When *Christ* publishes love to the world, it is pleasant to hear it: But he longs to hear him say to his own soul, my beloved. He has heard wisdom inviting the sons of men to her feast. *Prov. ix. 5.* "Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

mingled." He has tasted of these provisions in the spiritual sense of them, and he would partake thereof in all the sensible emblems too.

He is well pleased with the covenant of grace, and he agrees to it heartily; he would therefore set his own seal to it, and receive a seal from God. He that has a true relish of divine privileges, will long after their increase and enlargement; he that has felt any thing of heaven, will get as near it as possible here on earth.

Now are these the breathings of our souls? Have we ever found such divine delight in approaching to God, as makes us long after greater degrees of nearness to him? We have reason to doubt, whether our hearts ever drew near to God in the common institutions of his worship, such as prayer, reading, and hearing the word, if we have no appetite to the special entertainments of his house, and the provisions of his holy table. We may justly question, whether our souls are brought near to God at all, if we have no desire to dwell with him.

Reason II. "He that feels grace begun in his heart by approaching to God, will be ever pursuing those methods whereby it may be carried on." The very word *οικοδομη*, or edification, which is used in several places of the new testament to signify the growth of grace, does properly mean building up, and seems to have a special reference to the house of God, that spiritual building to which every true christian should belong, and that in a visible manner too. He that was convinced of sin and of righteousness, and was led into the glorious light of the gospel, by drawing near to God in public worship, when he was before blind and ignorant, will surely seek a greater nearness to God, that he may insure divine illuminations, and dwell always in the light. He that was sanctified and made a new creature, by approaching to God in the common ministrations of his temple, will lay himself under all the special advantages that the temple is furnished with, to maintain his new nature, and increase in holiness. The communion of the saints, and the fellowship of a church, is an appointed means for the increase of grace, and fruitfulness in every good work, *Psal. xcii. 13, 14.* "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing." And I think I may pronounce this truth boldly, "That soul has nothing of true religion or piety begun, who is perfectly contented with any little and low degrees of it, and does not desire it's increase.

The christian who has found God in his sanctuary according to his word, longs to be satisfied with more of his special goodness. You may read his encouragements in the words of the prophet, *Isai. lv. 3, 11.* compared with chapter *lvi. 4—7.* When the Lord said to him in the public ministry, "Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you;" he heard the invitation of mercy, and he entered into the covenant of the Lord, and he begun to taste his grace: He came, he heard, and his soul lives. He has found the word of God accomplishing his good pleasure, and prospered thus far in the thing for which it was sent: Therefore he joins himself to the Lord, and takes up his place in his house, and takes hold on his covenant in a public profession; he hopes, now he is brought to God's holy mountain, that he shall be made joyful in his house of prayer.

He that has found the accomplishment of some promises, would put his soul directly under the influence of all of them. He has faith, and believes that God is faithful, and will fulfil all his relations; he has trusted in several of the relations which God has assumed, and found them already fulfilled, as a faithful creator, preserver, redeemer,

redeemer, &c. now he would put himself under his care as a Father of the family, and a master of the house, as the king of his church; and when he enters into *Zion*, or joins himself to a christian church, he humbly expects to find those promises made good, *Pfal.* cxxxii. 15, 16. "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy." And *Pfal.* xcii. 13. "Those who are planted in the courts of God shall flourish and be fruitful there."

Now it is proper to put this question to our own souls: Do those of us who are joined in holy fellowship take pleasure in our station in the church, as it is an appointed means to increase grace in us, and to promote universal holiness both of heart and life? Do we wait upon God in the solemn ordinances of his church, with a humble faith in his promises, that he will meet and bless us there?

And as for those of us who have not yet taken up our places in the house of God, do we desire that holiness should increase in us? And why then do we not breathe after the blessings of *Sion*, and an accomplishment of those promises which God has made to his church? What sign or evidence can we have that we ever begun to receive grace from God, if we have no longing desires of soul to enjoy greater degrees of it? And how can we pretend to long after growth in grace, if we refuse the appointed means of it?

Reason III. "He that is caused to draw near to God in public worship, finds his soul softened by the approaches of divine grace, and feels the awful impression of divine commands to perform social worship." He reads his duty plain by the light of nature, that there ought to be religious societies, and public honour paid to God: He reads it yet plainer in the word of scripture, that the original christians were wont to form themselves into churches, or sacred societies, to celebrate the institutions of their Lord, and are required by the apostle not to forsake these assemblies: His conscience feels the divine authority, and he can cannot resist plain duty.

It would be too large here to lay down half the reasons of church-fellowship, as a duty incumbent on those that have tasted of the grace of God; it may be proved in a typical way at least, from the practice of the *Jews*, and the church under the old testament, in their public and solemn covenanting with God: It may be further evidenced by the many prophecies and promises concerning *Zion*, some of which have a reference to new-testament times, and the assemblies of the saints under the dispensation of the gospel: It may be inferred from the directions of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, concerning the discipline of a church, as well as from the positive institution of the Lord's supper, which must not be celebrated but in a christian assembly: It may be argued from the many counsels and directions which saint *Paul* has given concerning various offices, and forms of order and government, which can have no place, but in a particular church: The great designs and ends of church-fellowship, with regard to the public honour of God, the glory of *Christ*, and the spiritual benefit of men, are sufficient proofs of this duty: And all these arguments are established and confirmed by the practice of the apostles, and the primitive converts.

Now I say, a soul that has approached unto God in divine ordinances, will obey divine commands: He that tastes sacred pleasure, will learn sacred duty. He that has received divine mercy, will reverence divine authority. So the saints in *2 Cor.* viii. 5. "They gave their own selves first to the Lord, and then resigned themselves to the directions and commands of the apostles, according to the will of God."

Now let us see whether we feel the influence of this command. Do we, who are joined in holy communion, continue our stations in a church of *Christ*, from the authority.

authority of a divine institution, and love to the ordinance? Or is it because we can without difficulty or shame break the bonds of *Christ*, and cast his cords from us? And let us all examine by this rule, whether we truly approach unto God in ordinances, or no. Have we been melted by divine love into a compliance with all the institutions of God? Or can we easily content ourselves to make a mere common profession, without ever subjecting ourselves to the ordinances of God's house? If you believe the special solemnities of the church to be a divine appointment, and yet have no thought or desire tending that way, you will have much ado to prove that you are sincere in any part of worship.

Reason IV. "He that truly draws near to God, finds so much satisfaction in it, that he loves to lay himself under more and stronger engagements to abide near to him." Those that delight in seeking the Lord their God, will not only ask the way to *Zion* with their faces thitherward, but they will also agree together and say, "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten," *Jer. l. 4, 5*. In a solemn manner they will give themselves up to the Lord in the face of his church. They take pleasure to lay bonds on their souls to walk closely with God; and they believe, and rejoice that the great God engages himself at the same time to walk with them, according to his ancient promise, *Lev. xxvi. 3, 12*. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them, I will walk among you, and will be your God; and ye shall be my people."

Besides, a person that is truly brought near to God by *Jesus Christ*, loves to put himself under the watch and care of *Christ*, and that in the most express and sensible manner, by coming into his house. He takes up his place there, that he may be guarded from those temptations, whereby the world might allure him to depart from God again. He gives himself up to the care and watchfulness of the pastor, whose business it is to watch over souls: He subjects himself to the watchful eye and care of all his brethren and fellow-christians in the church, that they may be as guards and assistants to him in his holy work. He thinks he can never lay himself under too many obligations to the Lord; and he desires that the vows of God may ever abide upon him, that his soul may be kept from all iniquity, and from wandering into forbidden ways.

Shall I intreat you now to enquire whether this be the temper of your hearts? Have you found so much pleasure in approaching God, and are you so fully persuaded that your happiness consists in it, that you are desirous to bind yourselves in the strongest manner to abide with God? Or do you think you have too many bonds upon you already? And is it for that reason you abstain from the fellowship of a church, lest ye should be tied too fast to religion, and have too many eyes and guards upon you? It is a dangerous sign that you have never been truly brought near to God, if you are willing to live at a looser rate, and are afraid of too many engagements to holiness.

Reason V. "He that draws near to God in worship, and enjoys the sweetness of the ordinances of *Christ*, will endeavour to maintain his public honour in the world." It is by such a public profession, *Christ* is honoured among men, and in his house are his ordinances celebrated. Now should christians refuse this duty, where would be a church to bear up the holy name of *Christ* in this sinful world? Where would be a house of God for ordinances to be administered in? It is therefore out of love to the ordinances where his soul has approached nigh to God, and out of love to *Christ*, to support his glory, and confess him among men, that such a person will
dwell

dwelling in the courts, in the house of the Lord, and give up his name to *Christ* in the fellowship of his church.

And what can our consciences answer now to such an enquiry as this? What concern have we for the public honour of *Christ*? Can we pretend to have tasted of his grace, and have no regard for his glory? Do we plead his name before God as our only hope, and are we unwilling to confess his name before men? Are there none of you in this assembly, who hope you are brought near to God by the blood of *Christ*, and yet delay and refuse to give this public honour to him in the world? What would become of the profession of the name and glory of *Christ* among men, if all were of your mind, and took no more care to maintain it than you do? Where would any church of *Christ* be found? Where would the special ordinances of the gospel be administered? Or any such thing as the public communion of the saints? If all were so negligent in this matter as you are, churches would be lost, and the Lord's supper quite forgotten; though our Lord appointed it to continue till he come.

Reason VI. "He that is brought near to God, and united to *Christ*, will love to look like one that is near God, like a member of *Christ*, and one of the body." He that is of the family of the faithful, delights to appear like one of *Christ*'s household, and therefore will dwell in his house. Gospel visible churches are types of the invisible: And a true christian is not ashamed to own his relation to the church above, by his communion with the church on earth.

It is true, a person may be a child of God in secret, and of the household of *Christ*, and yet may not at present have taken up his place in the family, nor dwell in the house of God, nor be joined to any visible church; but then such persons look like strangers, like the children of this world, for they dwell with them in the visible kingdom of *Satan*: Now true christians would, or should look like themselves, and not appear like foreigners and strangers, but as "fellow-citizens with the saints." *Ephes. ii. 19.*

I confess there may be some seasons and circumstances, which may not only indulge, but even oblige christians to conceal their character and profession. Piety and prudence agree well together; and we are not to expose ourselves, nor our sacred things, to a cruel and scoffing age, without an apparent call of *Christ*. "Pearls must not be cast before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and tear us." *Matth. vii. 6.* But remember, my friends, that this can never be an excuse for a constant and an universal neglect of the profession of *Christ*, and communion with his churches: And doubtless the guilt of such a neglect is more heinous in a day of liberty, and when there is the least temptation and danger.

Reason VII. "He that approaches to God the Father, and holds communion with him, loves to be near the children, and to hold communion with the saints; for he that loves God, must love his brother also," *1 John iv. 21.* And he must shew his love by delighting in their company, and dwelling with them, in the house of their common Father. He must and will hold a visible fellowship with them, as he hopes he has a share in their invisible blessings. All their infirmities and their follies do not disgust him half so much, as the image of God in them gives him pleasure: He loves to be with them, for God is with them; and he longs to be one of them, for they are one with *Christ*, united to him in one Spirit. There is a more intimate freedom in holy conversation among the inhabitants of one house, among the members of a christian church. They grow into an inward acquaintance: There is an opening their bosoms and their hearts to their brethren, and a sacred

friendship in spiritual affairs. See what affectionate intimacy *David* expresses, and what kind things he speaks concerning a fellow-member of the *jewish* church, though he indeed proved a false one, *Psal.* lv. 13, 14. "Thou my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance; we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." And fellow-Christians in the same society do, or should maintain such a pious amity.

Surely we have but poor evidences that our souls approach to God in his worship, if we have mean thoughts of his family, and despise his children, as though they were not worthy to be one with us, or we ashamed to be one with them. Will God, the glorious and the holy dwell amongst them, and are they too despicable and unworthy to have our company? Let us ask our own hearts, if we are related to God by adoption, and become his children, why do we not join ourselves to the family, and hold communion with our brethren?

Reflexion I. What further remarks shall we make now, at last, upon this doctrine, and this discourse? Surely "they teach us to make a severe reflexion upon ourselves and our conduct; if we find no desire to dwell in the house of God, no breathings of soul after the fellowship of saints, and the special ordinances of the church of *Christ*." Either we labour under some mistake, some ignorance of duty; or we are under the power of some present temptation; or else our fancied approaches to God are but deceits and delusions. Observe my words, I cannot say this is the case of all that are not joined to the disciples, and added to the visible church; but this must be the case of all that have no desires of it. They that have no inclination to get nearer to God than they are, have a just reason to think they were never brought near him.

Reflexion II. "There are surely some sensible defects or corruptions in that church, or there is a decay of religion in it's members, where church-fellowship is not still esteemed a pleasure and a privilege." Where holy communion is an insipid and tasteless thing, there must be some degrees of distance and estrangement between God and his people; either God is in some measure withdrawn from that church, where saints delight not in their public assemblies and ordinances, or he is withdrawn from our souls, if we take not delight therein; for where God dwells among his saints, pleasure will dwell too. It is the presence of God makes heaven, where pleasures are grown up to their full perfection.

Let us ask our souls, whether we are not decaying Christians? Did we not use to come up to the house of God with joy, and worship together with delight? And that perhaps in times of difficulty too, as well as in days of greater liberty? What a blessed frame of spirit was *David* in? *Psal.* xlii. 4. And surely we have felt the same sacred pleasure too, "when we went up, as it were, in multitudes to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise." Is it thus with us at present? Or have we lost the sense and savour of those days? Where is that holy desire, that impatient longing and thirsting after God, which once appeared among us? Our dwelling in the house of the Lord, has perhaps made the good things of his house familiar, common and contemptible. O let us strive and labour, and pray for recovering grace. Decays will grow upon us, and separate us farther from God, and from the delightful sense of his favour, unless we are watchful, and repent and renew our first love.

A N E W

A NEW
E S S A Y
O N
Civil power in things sacred :

OR AN
E N Q U I R Y
AFTER AN
ESTABLISHED RELIGION,

Consistent with

The just LIBERTIES of mankind, and practicable under
every form of CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

Digitized by Google

T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE author of these papers has frequently fallen into company, wherein he had occasion to converse on the topics of liberty and power, both civil and religious : And having never settled and ranged his own ideas and reasonings thereupon in so exact and so harmonious an order as he wished, he some years ago set himself down to try if he could draw out his thoughts into a regular scheme, whereby he might better confirm or correct his own conduct. He then applied himself to a diligent and faithful enquiry, without consulting other authors, how far his own reason would carry him toward the establishment of any certain religion in a country or nation, with a real desire to find a just foundation for it, and try how far it could be brought into form and method.

And that he might secure himself the better from all prejudices arising from present establishments, he proposed to himself the idea of a new erected state or government of any kind whatsoever, laying aside all prepossessions and influences from the present statutes and customs of men, and from the appearances of things in any nation whatsoever, while he was engaged in these speculations.

In matters of practice he has always shewn himself on every occasion a constant and sincere friend and faithful subject to our *british* government; and as he endeavours to pay every one in church and state their due, so he rejoices in the protestant succession to the crown, and the illustrious family which possesses it. And it is the desire of his soul, that our present rightful sovereign king GEORGE the second may have every grace and blessing poured down upon his royal person, to render him a long and glorious instrument of divine mercy, to diffuse blessings over the whole protestant world, and particularly over the *british* nation.

As the author abhors the thought of raising seditions in the state under our happy constitution from any pretences either civil or religious, so he has no views of disturbing any character or set of men in those just privileges and possessions which they enjoy by the laws of the land, for he possesses all his own privileges by the same.

He is so well convinced of our happy situation above and beyond almost every other nation under heaven, that he does not suppose it can be either proper or lawful for any persons or parties among us to attempt to shake the present foundations of our government, in order to introduce in practice such a scheme of liberty in matters of conscience as these papers may describe in speculation. Surely we value our *british* constitution and the privileges we enjoy, both civil and sacred, at too high a rate, ever to bring the hazard and loss of them into a competition with any

REV.

new schemes or models, which may be formed by the warm imaginations or doubtful reasonings of men.

Yet it may be proper and useful to any man for his own satisfaction to enter into this subject, and to search it through and through, according to his best capacity, that he may form a better judgment of the many late contests in our nation concerning penal laws and tests in civil and in religious affairs. The author was very desirous to try "how far his reason could establish a national religion," and adjust and limit the common rights of mankind, both sacred and civil, under this establishment, in any country whatsoever, wherein religion may be professed in various forms; and at the same time to maintain a perfect consistence with all due liberty of conscience, and support the just authority of supreme rulers. What he had written on this subject he was desirous to publish as a matter of further enquiry to those who have thought much on this argument; and perhaps it may serve to lead those who have never much thought of it into a more natural and easy track of thinking and reasoning about it.

If any thing in this essay shall prove so happy as to shed one peaceful and serene beam of light upon this dark and noisy controversy, he hopes to find forgiveness and acceptance among his best readers: And he would take pleasure in seeing such light further improved by minds better furnished, till it spread itself into a fair and glorious day. Such a clear and harmonious view of these subjects would do much toward the security and ease of civil government in any particular occurrences, as well as toward the general advantage of true religion and the support of just liberty, which are three of the most valuable privileges of mankind, and the choicest blessings on this side heaven.

March 20, 1738-9.

A NEW

A N E W
E S S A Y
O N

Civil power in things sacred:

O R,

An enquiry after an established religion, consistent with the just liberties of mankind, and practicable under every form of civil government.

S E C T I O N I.

Of the nature and ends of civil government, with the several kinds of it, and its extent to religion.

I. **T**HE design of civil government is to secure the persons, the properties, the just liberty and peace of mankind from the invasions and the injuries of their neighbours: Whereas if there were no such thing as government amongst men, the stronger would often make inroads upon the peace and possessions, the liberties and the lives of those that were weaker; and universal confusion and disorder, mischiefs, murders, and ten thousand miseries would overspread the face of the earth.

II. In order to this general good, viz. the preservation of the persons of men with their peace and possessions, mankind have been led by the principles of reason and

self

self-preservation to join themselves in distinct civil societies; wherein as by a compact, expressed or implied, every single person is concerned in the welfare and safety of all the rest, and all engage their assistance to defend any of the rest when their peace or possessions are invaded: so that by this means every single member of the society has the wisdom and strength of the whole engaged for his security and defence.

III. To attain this end most happily, different societies have chosen different forms of government, as they thought most conducive to obtain it.

1. Some have deemed it proper to be governed by a single person, and have ventured to put the authority and power of making and executing laws for guarding their persons and properties, and for avenging their injuries, into the hands of a single person; and have obliged themselves to assist and support him in the due exercise of this authority. This is called kingly government or monarchy: And where this kingly power has no limitations, it is called absolute monarchy or sovereignty.

2. Others have committed this same power to the hands of a few great men or nobles, persons of riches, or high birth, or power, or who are supposed to have superior wisdom and influence, who shall act in concert with one another to promote this end. This is called aristocracy; especially when it is agreed that these great men shall have their heirs for their successors, or shall have a right to chuse their own successors themselves; for then the people have divested themselves of all share in the government.

3. A third sort have chosen a popular government, that is, where the people themselves meet and make laws, and determine things of importance by a common vote or the sentence of the major part. But where the society is so numerous, that the people cannot all meet together for this end, they have parcelled out themselves into many districts, and chosen particular persons to represent them in each district. Thus the people are said to act and govern themselves by these their representatives, which are chosen anew by the people as often they think fit, or at annual or any stated seasons which the people agree upon. This is called democracy; and such a state is a proper republic or commonwealth in the strictest sense.

4. There are other societies again, which have made a compound government out of several of these; so the ancient *roman* government had the "patres," or "patricii," or senators as their nobility, and yet the plebeians or common people had much share in the government too by their power in chusing officers, &c. After the year of the city three hundred and eighty seven, the two consuls were generally one patrician and one plebeian. Sometimes there is made a mixture of all these forms of government: Such was the *roman* under their emperors, if not under some of their kings; at least, there was the appearance of it.

But the most regular mixture seems to be that wherein the chosen representatives of the people have their distinct share of government, the nobles or great men have their share, and a single person or the king has his part and share in this authority, and all agreed upon by the whole community, or by persons chosen to represent them. This is called a mixed monarchy; and herein these three estates of the kingdom are supposed by mutual assistances and mutual limitations, not only to secure the common peace, the liberty and welfare of the nation from enemies, but to guard it also from any dangerous inroads that might be made upon it by any one of these three powers themselves. Such is the happiness of *Great Britain* under the king, lords, and commons.

IV. Here

IV. Here let it be noted, that whosoever has the power of making laws, whether the king, the nobles, or the people, or all these together, yet still the particular execution of these laws must be committed to many particular magistrates or officers, and they are usually fixed in a subordination to one another, each of them fulfilling their several posts throughout the nation, in order to secure the general peace.

V. In all these forms of government there is, as I hinted before, a compact or agreement between the governors and governed, expressed or implied, viz. that the governors shall make it their care and business to protect the people in their lives, liberties and properties, by restraining or punishing those who injure, attack or assault them; and that the governed submit to be punished if any of them are found guilty of these practices: And also that they oblige themselves to pay such homage, honours, and taxes, and yield such assistance to the governors with their natural powers, and their money or possessions, as may best obtain the great ends of government, and the common safety of the whole society.

VI. For this purpose therefore, each person by this compact willingly abridges himself of some part of his original liberty or property, for the common service of the society of which he is a member: And he engages himself with his powers and capacities to defend and preserve the peace, and order, and government of the society, so long as he and his fellow-subjects are protected by it, in the enjoyment of all their natural rights and liberties. The very reason of man and the nature of things shew us the necessity of such agreements.

VII. From this view of things it appears, that though no particular form of government, besides the ancient *jewish*, could claim divine right, yet all government, in general, is originally from God, as he is the author of nature and reason, and the God of order and justice: And every particular government which is agreed upon by men, so far as it retains the original design of government, and faithfully preserves the peace and liberties of mankind, ought to be submitted to, and is supported by the authority of God; for it is God our creator, who by the light of reason hath led mankind into civil government, in order to their mutual help, and preservation, and peace.

In this sense it is that the two great apostles *Peter* and *Paul* vindicate civil governors, and demand subjection to them from christians. *Rom. xiii. 1—4.* “ Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: The powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, that is, are condemned; for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” *1 Pet. ii. 13.* “ Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors as to them who are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well.” What *St Paul* saith, is ordained of God, that is, in general, as civil government or civil powers, *St. Peter* calls the ordinance of man, that is, in particular, as to the several forms of this government which men agree upon, or appoint: And indeed God has left it to men to agree upon, and appoint the particular forms: And so far as any of them pursue and attain this end, they must be submitted to, and supported, as an appointment or ordinance both of God and man.

VIII. Though civil government is an ordinance of God, and appointed by him according to the light of reason, and is thus far supported by divine revelation, yet in it’s proper aims and designs it hath no direct reach nor authority beyond the benefit of men in this world: Nor do the things of religion, nor the affairs of a future

state come within it's cognizance, any further than they have a most evident reference to the natural and civil welfare of men in the present life: It was only for the security of their natural and civil interests and rights, that men at first joined themselves in civil societies, and not that their governors should chuse their religion for them.

Government itself is a necessary thing in this world, and a natural or moral institution of God among persons of all sorts of religion, whether heathens, *turks*, or christians, to preserve them in present peace: Nor do any of these religions alter the nature of civil government*.

IX. Whereas if civil government did properly extend it's authority to religion and the things of a future happiness, no government or governors could be said to be appointed of God who are of a false religion; and those only who know and teach, and promote the true religion, and lead people in a right way to this future happiness, could be of God's appointment; even as no government extending to civil things can be said to be of God any further than it tends to promote the civil peace and welfare.

But if such an unreasonable and absurd opinion as this were allowed, viz. that the appointment of true religion belongs to the civil government, and there is but one true religion, it would cut off civil government from being an appointment of God among all the nations of the earth, and in all ages of the world who had lost the true religion; and all those nations and ages would be left to everlasting anarchy and confusion, till God brought the true religion among them.

X. And on the other hand, if the authority of every civil government extended to direct the affairs of religion, and that by God's appointment; then every government would have a right to determine what shall be the religion of that society or nation; and by this means, as the true religion is professed by very few civil governments in comparison of the multitudes of false religions, there would be an obligation from God on the greatest part of mankind to submit to their governors when they enjoin a false religion, and receive, and practise it instead of the true, which is too absurd a thing to be supposed.

S E C T I O N II.

The necessity of acknowledging a God, and the religion of an oath.

I. **T**HOUGH religion, so far as it relates to the salvation of our souls and a future world of happiness, doth not come within the cognizance of civil government; yet as the affairs of men are situated in this world under all governments, there are several things relating to our civil welfare which seem to require the knowledge and profession of a God; as these four for instance: 1. Witnessing in controversies between two parties. 2. Information in criminal cases. 3. Security against secret plots and mischiefs from the people. 4. Guarding against oppression and injustice of the rulers. Let us consider each of these distinctly.

1. The

* What exception must be made for the *jewish* government, which was revealed to *Moses*, and was almost entirely divine, shall be taken notice of in it's due place.

1. The case of "witnessing in controversies between two contending parties requires the acknowledgment of a God." Partly through the ignorance of men, and partly through their evil inclinations, there will be controversies frequently arising among the people, which must be determined by the magistrate as a judge of right and wrong. Now in order to search into the truth of things, and the right of particular persons, it is not thought proper for the magistrate usually to give credit to any persons in their own cause, when there is no concurrent witness or witnesses who declare the same thing.

And whereas witnesses in many disputes about property may justly be suspected to warp from the truth through private influences, if there be no other person who can detect and discover them, therefore it is necessary they should have some knowledge, and make some profession of an invisible power who made and governs the world, who sees and hears and knows every thing which is done among men, and who is a guardian of justice and truth, and some time or other will terribly punish falsehood and lying.

2. "The case of information against criminals requires some profession of a God." Let it be considered, that whatsoever injuries or frauds, crimes or mischiefs, are practised or committed in any nation under these governments, they cannot be punished till those magistrates who are executors of the laws, are informed of them; nor can such informers at all times be safely credited, because they may have no regard to truth in themselves, or they may be swayed by some evil bias, unless they have some knowledge or belief and reverence of a higher power who knows all truth, and will avenge falsehood.

3 "To secure a state against secret plots and mischievous designs of the people requires the profession of a divine being." There are many frauds and plots, and secret evil practices which tend to the injury of mankind, to the ruin of all government and peace in a nation, and yet they cannot perhaps be found out by the eyes of men soon enough to prevent the mischief intended. Therefore the belief and awful sense of some all-knowing and over-ruling power is needful to guard the evil minds of men against contriving these secret mischievous practices, and the profession of this belief is a necessary band of common union and safety.

4. "The acknowledgment of a God is necessary to guard officers and rulers from oppressing the people." Magistrates or officers themselves may be easily inclined or tempted to neglect their duty to the people, they may be bribed or frightened to pass wicked and unjust judgments on men, or to commit grievous outrages and acts of violence upon them, if they have no knowledge nor belief of any superior power who rules the world, and will punish unfaithfulness, injustice, violence, oppression and falsehood in all ranks of his creatures, whether high or low, rich or poor.

II. In order therefore to a peaceful and successful government, and to the preservation of every man in his rights and liberties, it is necessary that both the governors and the subjects should acknowledge some God, that is, some superior invisible power who governs the world, who knows all secret things, and will punish those crimes or those acts of injustice or falsehood, either in the governor or the governed, which violate the common welfare of mankind, and which are committed in secret.

Whatever some witty persons have pretended, that a kingdom or state of atheists may be supported without any regard to a God or religion, it has huge and dreadful inconveniencies attending it, considering the wicked and perverse tempers and manners of men.

III. Now to secure a civil government in the execution of it's proper designs, to secure the mutual fidelity of subjects and their governors, and to secure the truth of witnesses in matters of controversy, and in informations brought against any criminals, the bond of an oath is the ultimate resort of men: For an oath is a solemn appeal to a God, concerning the truth of what they declare; it is an appeal to some superior and invisible power, who will avenge falsehood and perjury whereforever it is practised, though it should not or could not be found out by the search of men.

And let it be observed that an oath or an appeal to God concerning truth always implies in it, that we hope for a blessing from this God upon our fidelity, if we speak the truth; but that we imprecate the vengeance of this God to fall upon us, if we knowingly speak what is false, or act contrary to our covenants or engagements.

IV. I would fain have it observed also yet further that it will be a much more effectual means to secure mankind from perjury, and from every degree of falsehood or violation of an oath, if the oath were always administered by the magistrate with the utmost solemnity, and if the words in which an oath is formed did express the imprecation or curse upon falsehood strongly and terribly, rather than if it expressed only the blessing upon truth and faithfulness. And I have often thought that one reason why there is so much perjury in our nation, and the religion of an oath has so little force upon the consciences of men, is because in our common form, "So help me God," the blessing only is expressed, and the curse is concealed and only implied at a distance; so that very few who take the oath have such an awful sense of their transactions with an almighty avenging power at such a season as they ought to have, for want of the plainer appearance of the imprecation, as well as for want of greater solemnity in the manner of administering and taking the oath.

I well remember in former years a gentleman, who was a justice of peace in the country, informed me that ignorant people would easily be persuaded by their neighbours to go to take their oath before him concerning particular facts, when they would not be persuaded to assert the same thing boldly with some terrible imprecation themselves, of broken or withered limbs, if they did not utter the truth.

V. Upon the whole it is necessary, that the governors and governed should acknowledge and profess their belief and veneration of a God, that is, of some superior and invisible power who will punish perjury and violence and secret crimes against the welfare of mankind. And it seems a most proper and agreeable, if not a necessary thing, that each should be bound to the other, that is, the governors to the people, and the people to the governors by the solemnity of an oath, to fulfil their mutual duties and engagements of protection and obedience. In *Great Britain* the kings are engaged hereto by their coronation-oath, and the people by the oath of allegiance.

The coronation-oath obliges the king to grant and keep and confirm to his people the laws and customs, &c. and also, to his power, to cause law, justice and discretion in mercy and truth to be executed in all his judgments.

The oath of allegiance obliges the people to support the king in all his just rights and powers, so far as he can, doth, and will protect his subjects in their just rights and properties.

It is evidently a mutual contract, and both are bound to each other by this solemnity of an oath.

VI. It

VI. It seems to me also very proper, that the outward ceremony or action which is used in swearing, whether it be lifting up the hand, or kissing the book, &c. be publicly and authoritatively declared, not to be designed as a religious ceremony, whereby we pay our invented honours to God in the act of swearing, but that it is used only as a civil gesture or sign, whereby we testify to the world that we do call God to witness to the truth of that we speak. Hereby we shall secure many scrupulous persons from the fear of taking an oath with that sign, lest they should thereby worship the great God by ceremonies invented by men, which many good subjects have thought unlawful. Or if they do still really and in conscience scruple any particular gesture or outward sign, or ceremony, their oath expressed in full and strong language should be taken without it.

VII. If any particular persons of known sobriety should declare solemnly, that from a principle of conscience they scruple the form of an oath or a solemn appeal to God concerning the truth, I think they are bound to give some proper satisfaction to the government, that the form of words which they use in witnessing, in affirmations or promises, &c. shall be deemed in all respects equal to the obligation of an oath, viz. that their consciences are equally bound by it before God, and that they shall incur the same penalties among men by the violation thereof. This will relieve the people that are called quakers, who will not take any oath: And indeed without some such security no person is fit to enjoy the privileges of civil government, nor to be a member of any state, who refuses to bind his truth by an oath.

VIII. And therefore if there be any person who thinks and believes that the obligation arising from an oath, or from such a solemn affirmation made before the civil powers, may be dissolved and nullified by any other power upon earth, such a person may be lawfully excluded from becoming a member of the state, or enjoying any of the privileges thereof; unless he can find some way or other that shall be justly satisfactory to the state, concerning his truth or fidelity to his neighbours and his governors. For where one party cannot or will not effectually oblige themselves to allegiance and fidelity, the other party is not bound to afford them civil protection and the privileges of the government. How far the papists are concerned in this matter, let others judge: But I shall have occasion to mention this hereafter.

IX. I will not stay here to debate whether it be necessary for this purpose of swearing for the uses of civil government, that men should acknowledge one single almighty power, that is, the true God in opposition to all false gods: For it is certain that some governments, who worshipped idols or false gods, did believe that these invisible powers would punish injustice and fraud among men, and thereby did maintain and secure themselves, and made their nation tolerably peaceful and flourishing for years or ages. But this may be asserted with abundant evidence and truth, that the common acknowledgement of the one living and true God, both by princes and people, by the governors and governed, is by far the best and surest band of government and the common peace: But I shall have occasion to mention this also afterward.

S E C T I O N III.

Of public teachers of the laws and morality.

I. **A**S there are many social duties of the law of nature which regard the security of the lives and properties of men, for which all government is designed; such as honesty, justice, truth, gratitude, goodness to men, honour, and fidelity to superiors, &c. so there are many crimes which are destructive to their properties or their lives, or to their whole government and peace; such as treason in all degrees, cheating, stealing, robbing, plundering, adultery, assaults, maiming, murder, and various other sorts of injuries to the bodies of men, to their known rights, powers, and privileges, as well as to their estates, their reputation, good name, and comfort: All which ought to be in the power of civil governments to forbid and restrain by proper laws; which laws should sometimes have proper rewards appointed for the innocent informers and assistants of the magistrates, but always penalties to be inflicted on the criminal.

II. There are also some personal duties of the law of nature, such as sobriety and temperance, frugality and industry; and there are sins against this law which relate primarily and chiefly to single persons, such as intemperance of every kind, gluttony, drunkenness, profuse and riotous living, universal idleness or neglect of labour among the poor, fornication, self-murder, &c. which though they do not perhaps so sensibly, directly, and immediately injure our neighbours, yet they are very pernicious to any state or government, inasmuch as they dispose men greatly to the commission of injuries against their neighbours, the violation of the rights of mankind, and the peace of society and government. These crimes seem therefore properly to lie under the cognizance and the restraints of the civil government.

III. Now as there are laws which are or should be made in every society for the preservation of the peace, and for supporting and carrying on the common welfare of the society; and as some of these laws should forbid those social crimes, such as cheating, stealing, murder, adultery, &c. and these personal crimes, idleness, drunkenness, &c. so it is necessary in a well-constituted government, that there should be some common appointed way of communicating the knowledge of these laws to the people, that they may be well apprized what is their duty and what they are forbid to practise. Surely the laws of a land should be made known to those who are to walk and live according to them, and who are to be punished for not keeping them.

And by the way I wish I could give some sufficient reason why, when new laws are made in *Great Britain* by the three estates of the kingdom, there should not be as much care taken in a legal promulging them or the substance of them, so far as concerns all private persons at least, through every city and town in the nation, as there is of publishing the mere will of the prince by royal proclamations, which must be read in every market-town. Multitudes of people are as ignorant of the laws, as they would be of proclamations, if not published in this manner.

IV. And for the same reason, since the awful veneration of a superior invisible power that knows all things, and can punish falsehood and secret crimes, is necessary

fary to government, there should be some care taken by the governors that the knowledge of this superior invisible power should be some way proclaimed or propagated amongst all the subjects.

V. And though it is possible, as was hinted before, that the belief and acknowledgment of several gods, who are avengers of falsehood and secret mischief, may be consistent with the tolerable welfare and conveniencies of the state, yet it must be granted that polytheism, or the belief of many gods, hath so much absurdity in it, and is so contrary to the light of nature, that many inconveniencies may arise from it; and therefore it is highly proper that the existence and perfections, the providence and natural and moral government of the one true God should be some way made known through the nation, together with the natural veneration or reverence that is due to him from all men.

VI. Whether the belief and profession of the one true God should be imposed on all the nation under any penalty, I leave others to determine. I rather think it should not; and for these three reasons.

Reason I. There may be many heathens who worship several gods, who yet may be useful members of the state; they may heartily agree to an original compact of government, and may seal it sincerely with an oath; they may dread the vengeance of their gods falling upon them for falsehoods, and may perhaps add great wealth and strength to a government or nation; why then should they be utterly secluded from it?

If it be objected that no such persons as idolaters were permitted to live in the *jewish* state by the laws of God, Mr. *Locke* in his admirable letters of toleration has answered that difficulty, by shewing that the *jewish* government was a theocracy wherein God, even *Jehovah*, the one true God, was their political king, and therefore the acknowledgment of any other God was treason against the state; but it never was so in any other nation upon earth*.

Reason II. If the members of any state or government happen to be heathens or idolaters, or perhaps *manichees*, who believe two sovereign principles or powers, one of good, the other of evil, &c. they may be invited and inclined to hearken to the principles of true religion and christianity, if they are not utterly discouraged by finding penalties laid upon their mistaken belief; and they might by the same gentleness continue their favourable opinion of us, and grow up by degrees into believers of the one true God. I might repeat the same thing concerning the heathen neighbours of such a state or government, and strangers who come to traffick with them. By seeing the gentleness and goodness of such a christian nation, they by degrees may attend to the gospel of *Christ*, and be converted and become his disciples, and may be allured to unite themselves and their riches and powers to support this government. Penalties may make dissemblers and hypocrites, but good christians are not to be made this way.

Reason III.

* I would not willingly divert from my Subject here so far as to shew, that God was the proper political Lord and supreme king of the *Jews*, even after they had kings, as well as before. It was God himself who from time to time pointed out by inspiration, or by extraordinary providences, the *judges* who should rule them: It was God who pointed out their kings as his deputies in an immediate manner, as *Saul*, *David*, *Solomon* who was one of *David's* younger sons, &c. It was God who divided the kingdom into two kingdoms, who by his prophets gave *Jeroboam* ten tribes, who cut off his posterity and anointed *Jehu*, and again cut off his posterity, and did what he pleased in altering the successions of their kings; *Jehovah* the holy one of *Israel*, who was their God, was also their king.

Reason III. If it be allowed that polytheists should lie under any penalty by the law for owning many gods, let us suppose a *socinian* or an *arian*, a *turk* or a deist to be the supreme governor : May he not take into his head to lay the same penalty on *athanasians* for owning and adoring three distinct, infinite and almighty persons, of which the *unitarian* governor perhaps can get no other idea than that of three gods ? We well know that the governments of this world are not wont of themselves to be too nice or too just in their distinction of theological matters, nor too ready to put a favourable construction on the sentiments of those, who dare to differ from them. I fear the remonstrances made by the *athanasians* drawn from a few theological or metaphysical distinctions, or from the holy bible itself, would not easily persuade the *arian* or *socinian* ruler, the *turkish* or deist governor to make any saving difference between them and other polytheists : And thus the idolater with many gods, and the *athanasian* with his trinity would fall under the same public penalties, how unjust soever such a sentence might be, if thoroughly examined by christian principles.

VII. As those persons who are appointed by the government to teach the people the civil rules or statutes of the land, should be well instructed in them themselves, that as far as possible the people might never be led into a mistake in matters wherein their lives and properties are concerned ; so for the same reason, the persons that should be appointed by the state to instruct the people in the knowledge of a God and the religion of an oath, and to acquaint them with the rules of these personal and social virtues which are so necessary to good government, I say, these teachers should be themselves well instructed in the knowledge of God, of vice and virtue, and be also to all appearance pious and virtuous and loyal, practising that reverence to God, and those civil and moral laws which they teach, that with more success they may instruct the people in these things which are of so much importance to their civil welfare and the preservation of the government.

VIII. As taxes are raised by the state, and customs and tributes of various kinds justly imposed by the government, in order to defray the public expences and to pay the public officers ; so it seems reasonable that those public officers who are appointed to instruct the people in the knowledge of the laws of the land, and in the knowledge of these virtues and vices which affect the civil society, as well as in the knowledge of a God who will punish secret wickedness, and in the sacredness and solemnity of an oath, which is the bond of government, I say, it is reasonable that these public teachers should be paid or supported out of the civil list, if I may so express it, or the tribute raised for the support of civil government, since the support and peace of the civil government so much depends upon it*.

And perhaps we might venture so far as to say, that the preachers of natural religion in all the more necessary and obvious doctrines and duties of it, which have so evident a connexion with the civil prosperity and welfare of the state, may be lawfully maintained by the government out of the national tribute appointed to supply the civil list ; but I affirm it not at present. I would speak with all just diffidence in things dubious.

S E C -

* Long since this was written, I met with a particular appointment of such public sermons or instructions, to be given to the people in *China*, by their *Mandarins* or governors of towns and provinces, on the first and the fifteenth days of the month ; which is actually practised by them there, as *Pere Du Halde* gives us an account in his late history of *China*, volume I. page 53. where he enumerates all the sixteen texts given them by the emperor to enlarge upon one or another of them, twice a month in public

S E C T I O N IV.

Of the people's attendance on these public teachers.

I. **N**OW a question arises here, if there are public officers appointed to teach the laws of the land, and also to teach the things that relate to the knowledge of the true God, the religion of an oath, and those virtues and vices which concern the civil interests of the society, may not the supreme power likewise oblige the people at certain seasons to come and attend the lectures of these public teachers, supposing that these times and seasons are so wisely adjusted as not to interfere with the civil interests of mankind or of that nation. To this I answer,

II. I see nothing in it inconsistent with the rights or just liberties of mankind : And upon this account I would ask, may not a christian prince appoint a certain hour of the first day of the week which christians esteem sacred, to be employed in hearing these lectures ? And for the same reason might not a *jewish* prince appoint some part of the last day of the week, which the *Jews* count sacred, for persons to hear such lectures ? And a *turkish* prince appoint his lectures of the same kind upon a *friday* for the same reason ?

III. And I might add further, that if the state judge it necessary, that one day in seven, or nine, or twelve, or twice in a month people should be restrained from their usual labours in public, partly to give rest to the labouring part of a nation, both man and beast, and partly that they may be more at leisure for these public lectures in their regular course, I do not at present see any thing in it inconsistent with the just liberties of the people : Provided always that the time or times appointed for such public lectures, are not so numerous nor so large as to hinder the common welfare of the people in their several particular employments, or to obstruct or prevent or too much curtail and diminish religious services, or the necessary duties wherein conscience obliges each of them to pay special honours to the God they profess ; of which hereafter.

IV. It is granted indeed, that the *Jews* so long as they were a nation under a distinct government of their own, were actually under a theocracy ; God was their political head and their king ; and therefore the civil and the religious concerns of that nation were more intermingled one with another in the same pages of the bible ; and the religious observation of certain days and times was appointed by God, as the particular governor of that land as well as the universal Lord of conscience ; which land was not very large in it's whole extent. But these peculiarities of government cannot be applied to any other nation or people whatsoever ; nor even to the *Jews* at present, who are now no united nation, but are abandoned by God their king to be a scattered people throughout the earth.

Though nothing can be inferred from the special laws of the *Jews* about days appointed for public worship under severe penalties, which would justify other magistrates in enacting such laws, yet the nature of the thing, if such lectures of civil and

VOL. VI.

U

moral

lic assemblies. Almost every one of them contains some moral virtue, and there is a specimen added of the sermon of a *Mandarin* upon one of them. It may be observed indeed as a defect in the choice of these subjects, that not one of them has any relation to their gods or religion, except that which orders the stifling of new sects, and I think is the only one that cannot be vindicated.

moral laws must be read, will certainly require certain times to be appointed for reading them and attendance upon them. And therefore it will be absolutely necessary that such days, or hours at least, be legally settled by public authority, since the welfare of the state requires it.

V. It will be said perhaps, that however these attendances are required by a law, it is not to be supposed they will be punctually performed nor this law obeyed, unless there be some penalty annexed to the neglect. I acknowledge it, and therefore the penalty should in such cases be so wisely framed and limited, that it may not exceed the damage the public may be supposed to sustain by such a neglect.

As for the neglect of attending these public lectures, I fear it will hardly be esteemed a sufficient penalty, that persons by this neglect will continue ignorant of the laws moral and civil, and thereby be more exposed to incur the several penalties to which the breaking of those laws will subject them. If any other penalties be needful, let others propose them. I would be very cautious in appointing penalties, though a law has but small force without them.

VI. But it will be objected here in opposition to any such penalties, since God only is the Lord of conscience, no government has any right or authority to impose any thing on the consciences of it's subjects, which they solemnly declare or swear they believe to be unlawful or offensive to God, as shall be more particularly shewn afterward: Suppose then any persons should pretend their conscience does not permit them to attend upon these established moral lectures of the veneration due to a God, and the various civil duties to men on those days or at those seasons that are appointed by the state for these lectures: As for instance, suppose a christian in a *turkish* country be appointed to attend on these public lectures on the Lord's day or *sunday* which he accounts sacred; or suppose a *jew* should be required to give his attention to them on a *saturday*, which is his sabbath; would not this be a violation of the rights of conscience, if this attendance on these established lectures were imposed with a penalty?

I must answer still, that conscience in things relating to God must not be imposed upon, nor can men be obliged to alienate sacred time to mere civil purposes, but where the real necessities of the state require it; and there I suppose God will not account it criminal to comply with the necessities of the state on his own sacred day; as for instance, to stop a flood, to quench a fire, or to repel an invasion.

And as the consciences of the subjects should not without necessity be imposed upon to hear these national statutes or civil lectures, where they think the sacred time is profaned hereby; so it is still more evident that no person should be constrained against his conscience to be a reader of these civil lectures, who thinks either the reading itself or the time of reading to be unlawful or offensive to God. And I think it can never be supposed that the necessities of the state can be such, as to require those very persons to read these things who think it unlawful to do it. Surely others should do that office.

Yet if I may speak my most free and reasonable thoughts here, I can hardly believe the great God would account it a violation of some part of his appointed sabbath, whether *saturday* or *sunday*, to hear such lessons of morality and virtue, or lessons of the knowledge of God and duty to him and to civil governors, which should be the chief substance of these lectures: For we find even under the strictnesses of the *jewish* sabbatizing, our blessed Saviour himself went to a feast at the house of a pharisee, *Luke xiv. 1.* and he taught them there good-manners and civility as well as morality, viz. "that they should not sit down in the chief place lest they should

should be removed with shame to some lower room." And it is certain that all the books of *Moses* were read in their synagogues on the sabbath-day, wherein now and then the laws of their civil government and rules of their civil life filled up whole chapters, and employed a considerable part of the time of their attendance. But we must remember indeed that God was their king, and therefore sacred and civil affairs were intermingled.

And if such days as some persons repute sacred should be appointed by the state for these lectures, perhaps it is proper that the christians or the *Jews* in such a nation should be content to take other hours of the same *saturday* or *sunday* to worship their God upon his own appointed day, with what they suppose to be his own instituted forms or peculiar modes of worship: Always supposing, as before hinted, that the reading of the laws of the land, or rather short abstracts of them, take up but a small part of that time which is supposed to be sacred.

VIII. However if any princes or any governors would shew themselves to be fathers of their people, should they not with all tenderness and care appoint such times and seasons for these public and established lectures, as might not give offence to the consciences of any of their subjects as far as possible? Nor should the penalties or very small fines for the absence of any of their subjects at such appointed seasons exceed what a tender father would see necessary for the welfare of the state to inflict on his son, who would willingly serve and obey him in those things, which yet a mistaken conscience and his sense of duty to God hardly permits him to perform.

And in all these things let it be still observed and inviolably maintained, that no law should ever be enacted nor any penalty of any kind established, but what appears necessary for the good of the state or the public civil welfare; beyond which the authority of men in civil government cannot reach*.

S E C T I O N V.

The qualifications of complete subjects of the state, and of the magistrates thereof.

I. **T**HUS far then we have proceeded, and it appears that the knowledge of a God, and of the duty of obedience to governors in civil things according to the laws of the land, together with moral duties that are necessary to the welfare of the community and the support of government, ought to be taught to all the people, and I think the people ought to attend and learn something of them.

II. It must be always granted and allowed in all governments, that during the state of infancy or minority every person born in the nation, and especially every child of a member of the community, is to be esteemed so far a member of it, as to receive protection from the government, upon the allegiance of it's parents; and to enjoy all those privileges which a minor is capable of.

III. But what if we should suppose this membership arising from his parents, together with the privileges thereof should cease when he arrives at age? I enquire then, whether it may not be a very proper thing that every person or at least every man, at

U 2

the

* Note, this section as well as this whole treatise was written a long time before the act about reading the law made against the murderers of captain *Porteous* in *Scotland* was framed or thought of.

the age of twenty-one years, should in some court of justice or before some magistrate, be required by law to declare or profess this his veneration of a God, and his obedient regard to these moral and civil laws, which it is supposed he has learned in the great and general articles of them, so far as they are consistent with his duty to God; and this in order to become a personal partaker of the privileges of the government for the rest of his life, and to be made a complete member of the state.

Is it reasonable that any man should enjoy all the privileges of any society who will not oblige himself to the general and necessary rules of the society? And would not such a law be more likely to persuade and constrain parents to take some care that their children should be acquainted with these things which are so necessary to the welfare of mankind and of the state? And that they should have some tolerable knowledge of them before they arrive at the age of man, when the law calls upon them to become complete and personal subjects of the state?

IV. Does it not seem very necessary also, that all who are constituted magistrates or officers in the state, should not only profess these things at the time of their being invested in their office, but that they should also be persons, who to all appearance practise according to their profession? For how shall we suppose those persons will be fit guardians or executors of the civil or moral laws, who themselves manifest by their practice that they have no regard to them? Is it not evident that a man who abuses the name of God by profane swearing and cursing, who is given to drunkenness or lewdness, cheating and lying, acts of violence and oppression, or any scandalous crime which interferes with the good of mankind and the welfare of a government; I say, is it not evident that such a man should never be made a magistrate or officer for the execution of the laws of the land? Is not this of vastly greater importance than to enquire into the speculative opinions of men and their peculiar formalities of worship, in order to judge whether they should be made officers in the state?

V. Would there also be any unreasonable hardship or any inconvenience in it, if such a civil officer who is found guilty of the public violation of the civil or moral laws of the state, should be exposed to a double penalty upon the transgression of any of these moral or civil laws? Or sometimes perhaps, if the penalty be a fine, may it not be made tenfold or more according to the quality or character of such an offender? Would not this be a more powerful means, of keeping both magistrates and people within the rules of virtue and public safety.

S E C T I O N VI.

Of public worship on the principles of natural religion.

I. **T**HOUGH we have already spoken concerning the veneration of a God as necessary in civil government, yet we have not hitherto considered any special act of religion to be performed toward him besides the religion of an oath.

It comes now to be enquired, whether the acknowledgement of a God in a sufficient manner to answer the purposes of civil government, does not also imply and demand, some public veneration or worship to be paid to him at certain seasons, that the world may see, as far as outward actions can manifest it, that we believe and reverence a divine power? This was supposed to be so necessary to the establishment of

of a state upon proper foundations, that Mr. *Locke*, that great patron of liberty, in the laws which he drew up for *Carolina*, appointed, that no man should have any estate or habitation in it, that does not acknowledge a God, and that this God is publicly and solemnly to be worshipped. Article 95.

II. Now the most natural, obvious and necessary parts of worship, are praise and adoration of this God, on account of his powers and perfections, the invocation of him by prayer for the blessings we stand in need of, and thanksgiving for the blessings we have received, acknowledging all that we have, even our being and our comforts, to be derived originally from him.

III. May not then every civil government appoint certain persons to offer up public prayers and praises unto the great God at certain stated seasons, and require the attendance of the people on this worship, since this is an act of natural religion, and some public worship seems necessary for every subject of the state to approve himself a believer in a God? I answer,

It is difficult to find how this may be done in any nation without trenching upon the liberty of mankind, and imposing upon the consciences of some of the inhabitants of the land; and that for these reasons.

IV. Reason I. First, It has been already granted that all the people or inhabitants of the land may not have learned to acknowledge the one true God, and if they happen to be heathens or polytheists, they may think it hard, to be constrained by a magistrate to worship, as the *athenians* did, an "unknown God;" *Acts* xvii. 23. at least till they have been all so far taught and instructed as to know, believe, and profess the true God alone.

V. Reason II. Again, If the one true God be thus publicly worshipped merely according to the dictates of the light of nature, there may be several sects in the nation who may think it necessary to worship him with the addition or mixture of their peculiar rites and ceremonies, which they suppose divine, whenever they come before him; and therefore they should never be compelled to attend this mere natural worship. Christians would say, they are particularly required to worship the true God, in the name and by the mediation of *Jesus Christ*, according as our Lord has taught them. *John* xiv. 6. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." *John* xvi. 24. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name, ask and ye shall receive." And St. *Paul* tells us, that whatever we do, and especially in divine worship, of which he is there speaking; "it should be all in the name of *Christ*." *Col.* iii. 17. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Now a christian may think it unlawful to come and worship even the one true God together with the deists, and to join with them in those prayers and praises which are not offered in the name of *Christ* or by his mediation, and therefore he should never be constrained to attend this natural worship by any penalty.

VI. Reason III. I know not how far it may be supposed to alleviate this difficulty and make the conscience of every christian more easy, to tell him, that there are many parts of worship paid to God in christian churches without the actual use of the name of *Christ*. Do we not sing *David's* psalms? Do we not repeat the Lord's prayer? And if it be lawful to address God by several of these psalms or this prayer, wherein there is not the least mention of the name or mediation of *Christ*, may we not join with the natural religion and worship of deists in their prayers and praises, supposing that all their expressions be conformable to what reason and the light of nature dictate; which the christian religion always pre-supposes and confirms?

VII. Reason

VII. Reason IV. If it shall be said here, that when God is worshipped by *jewish* psalms or by the Lord's prayer, christians do or should in their own mental meditations join the name of *Christ* and his mediation to these addresses to God; may it not be said also, that the same mental meditations may join the name and mediation of *Christ* to all these public and national invocations and adorations of God performed according to the light of nature?

VIII. Reason V. If this might be allowed, there would be then indeed a sort of natural religion, which is the foundation of all true revealed religion, which might be taught universally to all the people, which might be practised and established through the nation, and perhaps be supported by the state: But still I fear the universal attendance on worship could not be commanded under any penalty, because all christian people will not or cannot satisfy their consciences with the salvo proposed; and perhaps other sects may dislike it too upon the same foundation.

IX. Reason VI. And besides, many persons may find their consciences dissatisfied with the men whom the state shall chuse to offer up their social worship to God; they may be dissatisfied with other expressions or other omissions in the public worship or in the appointed forms thereof, besides those which I have mentioned; they may be also dissatisfied to have communion in worship with a congregation of deists, or with mere unitarian worshippers, if they profess the holy scripture and the trinity. Many sects may declare their consciences are really dissatisfied with this worship, because all men are bound to offer their best unto God, and they would complain that such mere natural worship is far below the best that they could offer; now the state has no power to compel the consciences of men to join in that worship of God which they dislike or disapprove as unworthy of him or unacceptable to him, provided that they do every thing else that is necessary to become faithful members of the state.

S E C T I O N VII.

Of particular religions supposed to be revealed.

I. **S**UPPOSING that some public worship must be authoritatively required or maintained in a state, for the welfare of the state itself, let us enquire further then how it is possible to be done without infringing natural liberty.

Besides the general principles of natural religion, which seem reasonable and proper to be made known to all the people, as has been before declared, there may be several particular sects in the nation, both among the governors and governed, who have other special articles of faith and other peculiar rules of practice or worship, ceremony or sacrifice, over and above these natural and moral doctrines or duties. And these peculiarities of religion are believed to come to them by a revelation from the God they worship, or from men who were taught of God, which is much the same.

II. Now if public worship must be maintained, every man would chuse to do it in his own way: And every man, both governor and governed, ought to have full liberty to worship his God in that special way and manner which his own conscience believes to be of divine appointment, or which he thinks to be most necessary, in order to secure the special favour of his God and his own future happiness. This is a
personal

personal obligation which natural conscience, or the light of reason, which is the "candle of the Lord" within us, lays on every individual person among mankind; supposing always that this peculiar religion does not break in upon the just rights or the peace of our neighbours. And indeed if it does unjustly invade their peace or their natural or civil rights, this seems to be sufficient evidence that it does not come from God, who is the original author and supreme guardian of the natural rights of his creatures: Nor will any wise and righteous government indulge such mischievous pretences of conscience or divine revelation, though in any other case, I see not that any governors have a right to forbid it.

III. The great God who gave us all reason and conscience, never appointed the conscience, nor the reason, nor the will of one man absolutely to appoint the religious duties of another; except always in case of infancy, where conscience or reason is not grown up to it's proper exercise, and parents are intrusted with the education and the religion of their children till they can learn for themselves the knowledge of God and their duty to him.

The phantom or *chimera* of an universal conscience given by God himself to all supreme ruling powers for the authoritative guidance and sway of the ruled in every nation in religious affairs, is so poor and sorry a pretence, and is big with such absurdities, that it is now banished out of the books and opinions of every nation where liberty is known; nor should it ever be recalled or revived lest God, as the author of all civil government should be made the author and commander of all that idolatry and superstition, which the governors of this world may command.

IV. Where persons therefore profess the obligations of conscience to any revealed religion, and claim the right of worship which arises thence, it must always be granted; but still with this proviso, as was said before, that none of these pretences to divine revelation, none of these peculiar forms or practices, to which men profess to be bound by their consciences, be inconsistent with the peace of the state, the welfare of their neighbours, and the support of the civil government: For it is not to be supposed that the great God would ever reveal and appoint any thing to be believed or practised as a matter of religion, by creatures who must dwell under some civil government, which should be inconsistent with civil government itself or the common and social welfare of of mankind.

For this very reason it is that no religion hath a right to be tolerated which professes and maintains the persecution of other religions, or which binds down persons under penalties to act in the things of God contrary to their consciences; because this is injurious to mankind in general, and invades the just and natural liberties of men, and thereby breaks in upon the peace of the state.

And for the same reason no person, whatsoever religion he professes, can claim toleration for himself in the practice of it, who asserts and maintains a right to persecute other religions besides his own: Such a person is a common nuisance to a state, for his principles are inconsistent with the peace of civil society: And besides, what reason can he have to claim that toleration for himself which he refuses to others?

V. Where particular persons of the same religion shall unite in societies for religious purposes, with this proviso of the safety of the state, there the state has not only no right nor authority to forbid them, but the rulers of the state are obliged to guard and protect them from insults and injuries in the enjoyment of all their natural liberties and these inviolable rights of conscience; and they are obliged by their
office

office to maintain these rights of their people, in opposition to all the public scandal and outrage with which persons of different religions might be tempted to treat each other: For all magistrates are guardians of the peace of the state, and of all the natural rights and liberties of mankind, in things relating to God or man. The great rule is happily expressed by our Saviour, *Matth. xxii. 21.* "Render to *Cæsar* the things that are *Cæsar's*, and to God the things that are God's." The peace of the state, and it's civil welfare belongs to *Cæsar*, and he is to be honoured and supported by proper tribute for this purpose; but conscience belongs only to God, and no *Cæsar* on earth hath any right to invade it.

VI. Nor has any civil ruler whatsoever any right to require or command the people to profess and practise that peculiar religion which he himself professes, under any penalties, because the peculiarities of this or of any other sect of religion are not necessary for the good of the state. A man may be in all respects as useful and valuable a member and supporter of the state, though he profess and practise such a peculiar religion as is very different from what the rulers profess or practise, and in some respects, perhaps contrary to it.

VII. Whatsoever sects or societies of men agree together in any of these supposed revealed religions, or any religious ceremonies, forms or practices, which their consciences think necessary, they must agree also upon particular times and places for their peculiar exercises of public worship; and they must support and maintain the expences of them out of their own personal property, or at their own charge.

VIII. But that the state may take no umbrage or suspicion, at the religious assemblies of persons who differ from the religion of the rulers, as though they were designed for seditious purposes; and that every person may secure his full freedom to exercise his own peculiar religion according to his conscience without disturbance, it may be proper, if not necessary, that wheresoever ten or twelve or twenty persons, more or less, shall agree upon such a special or peculiar religion, and fix a place for their worship, they shall give notice of it to some public magistrate or public court, and let their religion and their place be registered under some particular name which they shall chuse for themselves.

Mr. *Locke* is so much of this mind in two or three articles of his laws drawn up for *Carolina* *, that he hardly thinks any person fit for the protection of the state and all the civil privileges thereof, if his name be not registered at seventeen years of age in some one or other worshipping society; I beg leave indeed to query, whether seventeen years are an age of sufficient discretion for every young person to determine that point. Perhaps the age of one and twenty may be early enough.

IX. As places must be agreed upon for social worship, so also must the time. Now suppose the time which some particular sects agree upon for their exercises of religion are believed by them to be made sacred for worshipping by divine appointment, such as *friday* of the *turks*, *saturday* of the *jews*, and *sunday* of the christians; and suppose these very days or part of these days should be appointed by the state for some civil purposes; as for instance, if in a heathen or a *turkish* government the people should be required to appear at a public market, or at a court of justice for witnesses or jury-men, or for a public taxation, or for exercise of the militia on a *saturday* or *sunday*, surely I think the state could not be censured and made criminal for appointing such a day for these purposes, unless they did it on purpose to distress any of their subjects.

* These few articles are the only things I consulted while I was drawing up this essay.

subjects *. But what must a *jew* or a christian do in such a case? Or what penalties may the state enact for the neglect of obedience to this law? I answer in the first place,

X. Answer I. That if the thing required be an action really and plainly necessary for the present and immediate welfare and preservation of the state or country, the *jew* or the christian might innocently comply with the call of the state in a christian or in a *jewish* country, and then it is certainly lawful to do the same in *Turkey*; as for instance, the repelling of an invasion, the stopping of a general inundation, the quenching of fire, and the preservation of lives from imminent destruction. This is allowed on all hands, and is not esteemed a criminal profanation of sacred time.

XI. Answer II. But if the scrupulous subjects see no such necessity in the case, for the preservation of the state or the welfare and lives of men, or if the state command such actions as may be really necessary in themselves; but which are not necessary at that particular time, and which in their opinion would criminally profane the days that the *jews* or christians call holy; then it seems proper and necessary that the *jew* should preserve his *saturday* as well as the christian his *sunday* sacred for rest and divine worship, as preferring "obedience to God rather than men:" And I think he must consequently submit to such penalties as the state thinks necessary for the public welfare. I see not how this can be avoided. The state must be the judge.

XII. The state therefore in such cases, as I said before, ought to enjoin no other penalty for such neglects, than a wise and tender father would impose upon a child who loves and honours him, when he is constrained to neglect some part of his father's commands in order to obey God and his conscience: And the penalty or forfeit of each man for neglect in such a case must necessarily be small, when it is measured by and adjusted to the detriment which it is supposed the state may receive from each single person's absence or neglect of the required hour and civil service appointed by the state. Or if the penalty should be reduced a little below the detriment the state can be supposed to sustain by the neglect, I think it would not be amiss, since it is an expression of tenderness to the consciences of good men, who are in all respects faithful and obedient to the state.

XIII. Answer III. And after all, every private person must be left to his own conscience, to judge or determine how far the action required by the state would profane the day which he calls sacred, and whether God calls him to comply with the orders of state, or to refuse it, and submit to the penalty: Always supposing that the christian should not entirely neglect the public worship of God on a *sunday* nor the *jew* on a *saturday*; but as far as possible, should chuse those hours for the worship of God, which are best suited to the conveniency of the state and the general ease of those of his own sect: Nor do I think in such cases God would be found a rigorous or hard master.

XIV. And perhaps this may be one reason why the institution of the christian sabbath or *sunday*, is not so plain and express in the new testament, nor the rules of the

* I think the state could not be made criminal for appointing such a day for civil affairs, which some or other of their subjects may count sacred, unless they did it on purpose to distress their people, because there may be seven religions professed among all the numerous inhabitants of a land, and each of these may claim a distinct day of the week as sacred: What, must these civil affairs then have no one day appointed for the transaction of them, because every day that could be named would interfere with the professions or pretences of some sect or other.

tion of it so evident, nor so strict and particular as the sabbath of the *Jews*: viz. because the church of *Christ* being to be raised up in all nations, the consciences of young christians might be put under too severe a bondage in some places, where the demands of the state might greatly interfere with the religion of the *sunday*; especially if the peculiar obligations to keep the day were so very strict, and the prohibitions were so severe as was enjoined to the *Jews*.

XV. Yet still I think it must be granted, if we would keep up any serious sense of religion and the returns of public worship, one day in seven is little enough in general to be devoted to that purpose, which both the *jews* and christians believe to be divinely appointed.

XVI. As for the times and places of public worship in general, the magistrate has certainly so much to do in them, as not to suffer assemblies under pretence of religion, to meet in such places and at such times, as may give any just and reasonable umbrage to the state, that sedition or gross immoralities are practised there.

And if any society should think fit to keep their assemblies in caves, and lurking holes at midnight, the magistrate may always demand an officer to be present with such assemblies, to take care that the state receive no damage, and that morality and peace be preserved in the state: Or perhaps he may generally suppress such meetings, in such places and seasons, where there is just and evident reason for suspicion of such wicked practices, notwithstanding all pretences of conscience: For I am persuaded the great God, the author of all civil society and government, will never require any such sort of worship, nor at such times or places, as shall endanger the peace and welfare of cities and nations.

Let but rulers allow such liberty for worship, as God and nature demand, there will be no ground for any body to seek such places or times for social worship, as can give just umbrage to any state or government.

S E C T I O N VIII.

Of a particular religion professed by the ruling powers.

I. **A** N O T H E R question arises here. If the supreme power of the state or civil government professes some particular revealed religion, or worships the great God with some peculiar modes and ceremonies of it's own, may not the rulers of the state authorise and appoint men to be public teachers of their own religion in all the forms and ceremonies thereof? And may not these men celebrate these ceremonies by public authority, and lead others into the worship of their God according to these special forms and ceremonies? And may not the rulers appoint these teachers or priests to be paid out of the public revenue, or by tithes, &c. that is, tenths or twelfths of the improvement of the land, or by any taxes imposed by the government? To this I answer,

II. Answer. That every governor, every teacher, and every single person seems to have a natural right and liberty not only to practise their own religion themselves, but to persuade as many as they can to worship the God they worship, and that in and by their own approved forms. If duty to God should not require it, benevolence and love to our neighbours will incline men to this: But we must attempt it so far only as reason and persuasion can prevail, without any compulsion or force, for conscience

science and religion must be ever free: Whatsoever is done by mere compulsion or terror of men is not hearty and voluntary, and therefore it is not religion, and can never be pleasing to the great God.

III. But I cannot yet see any sufficient reason why a state should appoint the peculiarities of any revealed religion, or the special rites and ceremonies of any particular worshippers, or the men who celebrate them to be supported at the public charge: For these peculiarities are not necessary to the preservation of the state, nor to the common outward civil welfare of a people; and I think the power of the magistrate reaches no further.

Nor will I venture to say that taxes or tenths, or twelfths, or any subsidy should be raised by the state for any other end, than the civil welfare of the state requires. If a heathen prince impose a tenth penny on all his subjects, as a tax to maintain heathen worship, would a christian willingly pay it, and think himself bound in conscience to do it?

Is not this evidently the reason, why the people called *quakers* in our nation at home or abroad, refuse to pay the tithes to the clergy of the church of *England*, or of other christian churches, because they preach and practise many things in religion which the *quakers* do not believe, which the light of nature and reason does not dictate, and which are not necessary to the outward and civil welfare of mankind*.

IV. But it may be further enquired here, may not those teachers or publishers of the civil laws, or the moral duties of natural religion, which are before allowed to be paid out of the civil list, that is, by taxes on the people; I say, may not these men take an opportunity, when the people are met to hear civil and moral lectures, at the same time to instruct the people in the knowledge of the peculiar religion of their governors, and exhort them to comply with the rites and ceremonies thereof, and to join with them in their practice? To this I answer as before,

V. Answer. That it does not appear plain to me that taxes of any kind should ever be imposed on the people, in order to encourage and maintain the peculiar ceremonies or sacrifices, preachings or ministrations of any supposed revealed religion beyond what is natural, or what is necessary for the state. Such taxes may perhaps, with as much justice be imposed to maintain, any other expensive or curious and capricious humours of a prince, which have no relation to the civil welfare or to religion.

And besides, this imposition of such a tax might give a disgust to some of the people, who profess a very different religion, and hinder or discourage them from coming to hear the laws of the land, and lectures of moral virtue, which the state requires to be published and taught at that time and in that place. Would not a christian subject under a pagan or *mabometan* prince, think it hard to be required to hear lectures of the *alcaron*, and of *Mabomet's* follies, or of the reveries of the heathen priests and poets, of *Mars*, *Bacchus*, *Apollo*, *Diana*, &c. from week to week, instead of moral or civil laws? And perhaps their consciences might be much offended

X 2

at

* I do not by any means here pretend to vindicate the refusal of tithes and dues to the church in our nation; for they are to be considered as a civil or national tax or incumbrance, belonging to every piece of land or house bought or rented, and so appointed by our laws: And therefore every man knowingly buys or hires his land or his house with this incumbrance fixed on it, and belonging to those whom the state appoints to receive and possess it. But in the first fixing or erecting a civil government, of which I am speaking throughout this essay, one would not chuse to have such laws made, or such taxes or incumbrances established at first, which would afford any colour and occasion, for such a refusal or disobedience in times to come, as may arise from real scruples of conscience.

at it, and they might be tempted to neglect their attendance on, and acquaintance with the civil and moral laws, if they are mingled in the same lecture with *alcorans* and *tehmuds*, and *Homer's* hymns to the rabble of heathen gods.

VI. Yet I think this may be allowed, that at the end of the moral or civil lectures the magistrate, when an assembly is gathered, may appoint the lectures, or exercises or celebrations of his own peculiar religion to follow them, provided the people have notice of it, and as many as please are permitted to depart without penalty or reproach: And provided always the preacher is not paid out of the public money, for any thing he does over and above these moral or civil lectures, which are needful for the good of the state.

VII. And it is certain, this further allowance may be made, viz. that as any rich man may at his own private expence, or out of his own property maintain poets, philosophers, singers, teachers or priests, to preach and practise the doctrines and ceremonies of his own peculiar religion, provided they teach and act nothing inconsistent with the welfare of the state; so a prince or supreme power, may maintain teachers of the mathematics, philosophers, poets, stargazers, or priests and preachers of his religion, out of that part of his possession or revenue which is properly his own, or his personal property, and is designed for the support of himself and family and common equipage, even though it may be allotted him by the state or the laws of the land.

For if there ought to be a toleration of all religions which interfere not with the good of the state, and private persons may support the teachers and priests of their own religion out of their own property, I see no sufficient reason why the supreme power, or the governor should be debarred from the same privilege; and as he is supposed to be richer than any of the people, so he may maintain more priests or preachers of his own religion than others can.

And this practice might be so managed by the governing powers of any nation, if they are christian, and truly zealous for their religion and their Saviour, that would not in the least break in upon human liberty, and yet might give very great countenance and encouragement to christianity, and assist in spreading it through all the nation by degrees; or indeed any other religion for which the ruling powers are zealous.

I add also, that a religion thus professed and practised, and supported, by the beneficence of a prince or supreme powers, may be in some sense called an established religion, because it is supported by the rulers above and beyond any other form of religion.

VIII. But suppose the supreme and legislative powers of any state, should join the revenue or taxes, which they raise for the public support of government, with that revenue which they allow the prince for his private or domestic expence and his royal equipage, so that they are not distinguished: Has not the prince then a much larger power in his hands to promote his own peculiar religion by money, whether it be pagan, *turkish*, or christian? So far as I can see, it may be answered thus.

IX. Answer. Surely the legislative powers by mingling the revenues for the support of the government, with that of the domestic expence and equipage of the prince's family and court, have put it very much into the power and will of the prince, to lay out more or less money yearly for the maintenance and honour of his person, his court and his family as he shall see fit; always provided that the welfare and honour and offices of the state suffer no detriment, but have a full allowance made for them.

In

In the same manner we may reason about the expences employed in buildings, paintings, mathematic sciences or any of his own curiosities, or for the support of his own peculiar religion. If he maintain the necessary officers of the state in proper dignity, and keep up the necessary honours of his own court and household, as the dignity of his post requires, he has a liberty to save more money by prudence and thriftiness for any lawful diversions, or buildings, or philosophical experiments, or the practice and propagation of his own religion, &c. I say, he may save so much more of his revenue for such purposes and practices, than if these civil expences were distinctly settled and limited by distinct parts of the revenue appropriated to each.

X. But if many of the people should be of a different sect, and should find that the prince saves and withholds too much money from the uses of the state and his public honour, and that he expends too much upon the practice and propagation of a religion which they disapprove, it is possible they may grow uneasy and murmur at the largeness of their taxes imposed on them, which they daily observe to be spent, not in civil government, but in propagating a disagreeable religion: And in this case every such prince must be left to his own prudence, to judge how far his zeal to promote any peculiar religion, by such large and constant expences, should be indulged to the dissatisfaction of his subjects.

S E C T I O N IX.

Of a religion established among the rulers and officers of the state.

I. **A**FTER all our enquiries we have not hitherto found any one religion, whether natural or revealed, or pretending to revelation, which can be authoritatively established by the state through all the nation, and by that authority can justly demand or require the attendance and compliance of all the people under any penalty. Let us see then whether some one religion may not be established among all the ruling powers, and demand the attendance of the supreme and subordinate magistrates and officers of the land, and this would be some sort of established religion.

II. I enquire here then in the first place, whether the supreme power or powers or legislators of the state may not make laws, which shall constitute and require the religion which he or they profess, to be practised by all who are admitted to the civil and military offices thereof; and whether such a law may not rightfully exclude all persons who refuse to comply with this religion.

Some are entirely of this opinion; and the reason given for it is this; surely every master in a family may refuse to take any servant who is not qualified as he requires; as for instance, one who does not believe the bible, one who cannot speak *french* or *dutch*, one who is not willing to wear his livery, or who scruples to take an oath. Here is no injury done to any person whatsoever; for no man has a right to come into another man's house or family, and be made his servant, or to enjoy any post in his household, but by his appointment or order. Now military and civil officers in the state are but as servants in a great family; and no hurt is done to any subject in their natural or civil rights or properties, if they are constantly continued as subjects under the protection of the ruling powers, though they are not made officers or rulers in the state, because they have no right to it. To this enquiry I would make the following answers.

III. Answer I.

III. Answer I. It is granted that a master of a family has a right to take or exclude what persons he thinks proper for the service and welfare of his own private house, for they were not members of his family before they were taken into it: So the ruling power may chuse what persons and what officers he pleases for his own household, his personal affairs, his guards, and his own public equipage and honour, without any injury done to other persons, who never had any pretence, by station or merit, to be received into the royal household or the guards, as a part or member thereof. But the officers of a state, or magistrates of the country, stand in a very different character from the servants in a family, because every subject is already a member of the state, and if he has behaved well therein, he should at least stand capable of the preferments and offices of his own country, as what he has merited by his good character and behaviour, as a subject in that state of which he is a part or member: Nor is it reasonable or just, that a capacity of preferment should be taken from him by law, but for some civil crime or misdemeanor, because such an incapacity fixed by law, is a public reproach or civil punishment. I answer in the second place,

IV. Answer II. That it is possible the supreme ruling power, may at present profess a different religion from almost all the people, or may fall into such different sentiments, and then surely it doth not seem to be reasonable or fair to confine all inferior magistrates or officers to the religion of the supreme ruler, and to forbid the people ever to have any ruling officer among them, who is of their own religion, or to bind down all the officers, who must keep the people under due regulation and observance of the laws, to a peculiar religion which the bulk of the people dislike, and perhaps abhor. Would not this universal separation and opposition of religions, probably beget such a strangeness and ill-will between the rulers and the ruled, as might in a great measure endanger those bonds of union and love, and mutual good offices, which should be always reciprocally maintained between the rulers and the ruled? Would it not tend to provoke the people to sedition, and can it be ever esteemed true policy to follow such a conduct, as would bring such undesirable and dangerous consequences with it? I answer thirdly,

V. Answer III. By way of concession. When the supreme ruling powers and far the greatest part of the people are of one and the same religion, I think it cannot be unlawful, nor is it improper for them generally to chuse the subordinate ruling officers out of those persons who are of the same religion with the prince and the people: And while things continue so, there may seem to be good reasons for this conduct in the present disposition of human affairs. It may help to secure and establish union and love, and unanimity and mutual respect, between the rulers and ruled in any government: Which is of great importance to the welfare of the state.

But if there be a very considerable number of the people professing any other religion, I query whether it can be political wisdom to exclude them from every public office absolutely and universally without exception? And it may be another query whether it be an instance of wise conduct in any such nation, to make a law which shall incapacitate a man to be an officer in the state, merely because he professes a different religion; which difference in truth, hath nothing to do with civil government? Or can it be proper, to put such a man under a perpetual disability by the sentence of a law, who is wise and good, who is strictly faithful to the state, who is acceptable to the people, and hath great personal merit and fitness, to supply a vacant post of profit or honour?

And

And it may be said yet further, that in some constitutions of government, the towns and cities and particular districts and divisions, may have a right to chuse their own officers; and must a man of such an excellent character as I have described, and who is much desired by all the inhabitants, be rendered useles in government, merely because his conscience obliges him to worship God in another manner than the prince does? And should the people be for ever deprived of their ancient right to chuse such a person into office, and enjoy the benefit of his talents and virtues?

However it is evident, that if a particular religion be professed by the people and their governors both supreme and subordinate, it may be well enough called the national religion, since the greatest part of the nation profess the same religion with the supreme power in it, and generally all the subordinate powers profess it also; though if it be not established under any legal requirements and penalties, some persons may doubt, whether it can be so well pronounced an established religion in the full propriety of the words. In the fourth place I answer,

VI. Answer IV. Suppose a whole nation, both rulers and people should agree in the present age so far, as actually to have no magistrates or officers supreme or subordinate, chosen or appointed, but who profess such a peculiar religion as they themselves profess; yet considering that we are all fallible creatures, and that our knowledge is very imperfect, and our opinions are very changeable, considering also that the changes and revolutions of human affairs, and the situation of them are very various, I query whether it be a piece of wisdom in any state, to make such laws like the *medes* and *persians*, which shall never be altered in all times to come. Who knows what future occurrences may arise, wherein it may be necessary for a state to do that in one age for it's own preservation and advantage, which was not proper in former years? And who knows, what further views may arise in the minds of the ruling powers through longer observation and experience, which may shew them how reasonable it is to repeal laws that have been formerly made, though at that time, they might generally be thought necessary. Surely it can be no piece of wisdom for a person or a family or a kingdom, by any present resolution or law to preclude themselves and their posterity for ever from all possible advantages that might arise from the change or repeal of it in future times. In the last place,

VII. Answer V. I would make the supposition, that the present religion both of prince and people is heathen idolatry, and then I would make these few queries following. viz.

Query I. If such a law had been made in every nation in the days of heathenism, to exclude all but heathens and idolaters from public posts, I query whether the government of all the *european* as well as eastern nations, must not have continued for ever heathen? And whether any secular power or government in *Europe*, could ever have regularly become christian? Now surely it would be hard to say, that that could have been an equitable law which should for ever exclude a christian prince from the throne in every nation of *Europe*, and forbid christian officers ever to have been established amongst them.

Query II. Whether the understanding and conscience of prince or people who made such a law, might not in time gain further light and knowledge, so as actually to cast off their old heathen religion, since the light of conscience ought to be obeyed? But must every one of them lose their present civil rights by this their increase of knowledge and obedience to God and conscience? Must the prince, if he turns christian, lose all his authority, or the officers their civil or military power, merely because they have forsaken idolatry and worshipped the one true God through *Jesus Christ*;

Christ; still supposing, that all of them are faithful to fulfil their present posts in the state, and all their duties to it?

The absurdity of this would yet more abundantly appear, if the bulk of the people were become christians too, and longed for a christian magistrate. What must both people and prince be eternal slaves to such a law, which their ancestors made in the time of ignorance? Must a christian people for ever be obliged to have heathen magistrates because their heathen ancestors once made such a law? Surely the very light of nature teaches us that the prince and the people, may join to reverse such a law whensoever they feel the mischief and slavery that attends it; and would they be wise, to try the same experiment again, when they have once felt the inconvenience and bondage of it?

Query III. May not some excellent persons be found, who are fit for any post or office in the government, whether supreme or subordinate, who may profess the gospel of *Christ*, and thus differ from the heathen religion which is established by this law? Persons I say, whom the people themselves would wish to be their rulers and governors, and persons who by the constitution have as much right to it as any others, excepting only their peculiar religion.

In an elective government, why should the people be forbid to chuse such supreme governors among them, only because they are christians? And why should the supreme power in any kingdom or government whatsoever, be forbid to make the fittest persons he can find, officers in the army and the state, merely because they are christians? Or if particular cities or towns or counties have a right by the constitution to chuse their own magistrates or officers, why should they be hindered from enjoying the benefit of such magistrates as are supposed to be wisest and fittest, merely because they profess christianity? Can this be for the welfare of the state, which the rulers and the ruled are all bound to consult? Can it be any advantage to a state to have worse officers chosen into any post, supreme or subordinate, and to have much fitter persons rejected, and that merely because they hold some christian opinions and practices, which have nothing to do with the state any further, than to teach and incline all men in all stations to make mankind more safe and happy.

VIII. Thus far may be argued, if the religions are entirely different in the very foundations and substance of them, as the heathen and the christian. But if the religions in contest be very nearly the same, and differ only in some circumstantial, there can never be so much reason why there should be so great a difference made between them in the disposal of public offices of trust or profit; for the dangers of any kind that can arise from such promiscuous officers is not so great or formidable. This therefore in such enquiries should always come into the consideration.

IX. But after all, if in any nation a great majority of the people together with the supreme rulers, be of one religion or one sect, and several other sects of the same religion are dispersed throughout the land, I cannot see any hurt in it, as I said before, if the ruling powers generally chuse and appoint persons of their own sect to be officers of the state; supposing still they do not exclude others by a law, and thereby lay a public reproach or odium upon those who have no way deserved it.

If there be a just and complete toleration of every such sect or religion, as doth not injure the public peace of the state, I do not see that the lesser sects have reason to complain, that they are not actually made rulers and officers of the state; provided always that there are no offices of burden and expence imposed upon them, while they are not called into any offices of honour or profit.

And

And if there are persons of worth and value, very fit in all respects to sustain public offices, and yet are of a different religion or different sect from the chief rulers and the bulk of the people, I think it must be determined by the wisdom of the rulers to judge where the superior balance lies, between the advantages arising from the good qualifications of the person, and the dangers which may arise from the difference of his religion; and accordingly they must determine whether it be fit to entrust him with any such public office or no, to which he has no claim by nature or by law.

Here an objection will arise from this concession, viz.

Objection. If the supreme rulers should judge, that the superior balance of wisdom lies in guarding against the danger of persons of a different religion constantly, why may not this be expressed and confirmed by a law, which is but the constant and final determination of the supreme rulers? But I answer as before,

Answer I. That, perhaps, it would not be just by a law, to lay any mark of infamy, any public odium or civil incapacity on persons, merely on account of their religion, where in all other respects they deserve well of the state. Besides,

Answer II. The present determination of any supreme ruler not to make such or such a man an officer or magistrate, because of the rulers jealousy of his religion, reaches but to the present time and the present situation of affairs, and this will answer all the just and reasonable purposes of a supreme ruler: But to establish such a law, lays a long and constant odium, or public reproach as well as incapacity, on that whole sect or party for time to come, when it may be the best interest of the state to have that very officer, or a magistrate of that religion, chosen or fixed in such a station. See section ix. paragraph 6. And,

Answer III. I enquire, whether in many cases this would not be found direct persecution for conscience: If ever so worthy a man be employed for several years in a heathen country, in an office of honour or profit, or both, and he be convinced and professes christianity, would not such a law, which excludes christians from all offices, turn him out of his place and livelihood, and perhaps leave him and his family to starve? The same case may happen, where any law is made to seclude any different sects of the same religion from all offices.

X. Yet in order to secure the peace and welfare of the state, and the common good of mankind, which is the great end of government, I would here venture to enquire whether there are not two sorts of persons, who may be constantly and rightfully excluded even by a law, from any supreme or subordinate offices in the state, and that merely upon the account of their religion or some wicked articles in it.

XI. First, When the religion which any person professes, contains such pernicious articles in it, and especially if it has been frequently attended with such correspondent practices from time to time, as give abundant evidence and example that the principles of that religion, encourage and authorize men to invade the peace of the state, the rights of the prince, and the civil or religious liberties, the property and welfare of the people.

Thence I would take leave to enquire, whether or no the popish religion, by it's persecuting and bloody principles, as well as by it's subjection to a foreign potentate or prince even the pope of *Rome*, who pretends to absolve men from the most solemn and sacred bonds; I say, whether this *roman* religion has not made it effectually appear, that neither princes nor people can be safe wheresoever the papists

have power * : For I take all those principles of religion which allow the deposing of kings and the persecuting of people, merely on account of religion, to be unjust in themselves, and inconsistent with the welfare of any state; and consequently I query whether any wise state should ever admit of such rulers or officers in any post whatsoever of high or low degree, unless they can first clear themselves from these wicked principles. In the second place,

XII. Secondly, I enquire whether persons, whose religion will not permit them to give effectual security of their allegiance to their superiors in the government, or security to the people of their protection, I say, whether persons of such a religion as indulges men in the violation of all such bonds of security, can be safely admitted to be supreme or subordinate officers in any state: For such officers cannot faithfully stipulate or contract with their prince to serve him; nor can rulers or princes of such a religion stipulate with their people to be faithful in their office: Nor do I see any way how such a religion can effectually secure the distinct rights either of people or prince, unless this part of it be absolutely and effectually renounced.

XIII. And indeed, as I have hinted before, such persons among the people who cannot engage by bonds laid upon conscience for their allegiance and faithfulness to any civil government, or who think their religion allows them to break those bonds for the sake of their religion, I do not see how they can claim common protection under any state or government whatsoever; and therefore I think with more abundant evidence, they may be very rightfully excluded by a law from any office therein. And we may be well assured that that religion can never be from God which allows no secure stipulation between prince and people; that is in short, which allows no mutual security in civil government, which in general is an ordinance of God for the good of mankind.

S E C T I O N X.

Of the power of the prince in every worshipping assembly.

I. **T**HOUGH the supreme power of any state, has no right to impose the profession or practice of any one peculiar religion upon the people, yet since civil government is an ordinance of God as the God of nature for the welfare of mankind, the supreme power in any nation may possibly have a right to command several things to be done in every assembly that meets for divine worship: As,

II. 1. I think they may give it in charge to every religious society, as they are members of the state, that sometimes at least, and upon proper occasions they should preach up moral duties to men, as well as the duties of piety towards God; that they should teach men to be honest and faithful, to be kind and compassionate, to be sober and temperate, and to be dutiful to their civil governors in all those things which
the

* Let it be observed here, that this scheme does not allow any prince or state to persecute the papists in the least degree on the account of their worshipping images, or making a piece of bread their God, and adoring it as the body of *Jesus Christ*; nor for any fooleries or idolatries in their religion, which do not injure the public welfare in things natural or civil. Not a farthing of their money, nor a hair of their head should be taken away on this account. But if they will profess and maintain such opinions and principles about the powers of a priest or a pope to absolve them of their oaths, and to break all their bands of duty to the civil government, and to their fellow-subjects, I see not how they can claim any protection from the state, much less an admission into any post of trust or profit, as appears in the next paragraphs.

the civil powers have a right to demand; and that they should preach against personal and social vices, as slander, theft, adultery, drunkenness, quarrelling, murder, cruelty, cheating, faction, sedition, tumult, rebellion, and the raising animosities and disturbances in the state: Especially where the magistrates, as *St. Paul* expresses it, "are not a terror to good works but to the evil, and are the ministers of God for good." This is the design of *St. Paul's* advice, *Rom. xiii. 1—7*. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.—Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God:—For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil.—Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, that is, for fear of punishment, but also for conscience-sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also." And he repeats such kind of advice to *Titus* the preacher. *Tit. iii. 1, 2*.—"Put them in mind, to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man," &c.

All these things being necessary to preserve the civil government and the state in welfare and peace, as well as necessary and essential parts of all the religions that are good for any thing in the world, I think it may lie within the province of the supreme power to require that the people in their religious assemblies, among other lessons, should be instructed in these matters at convenient seasons.

III. 2. I think the supreme power may require also that amongst the addresses or prayers for temporal blessings which are offered up to their God by any societies of men, there should be some petitions put up for the welfare of the government: Surely every man should pray for a spirit of wisdom and justice, and mercy, and the best of divine blessings upon their rulers. This is the instruction of the apostle to all christians, though it was supposed they lived then under heathen governments. *1 Tim. ii. 1*. "I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and all that are in authority, that under them we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

IV. 3. If magistrates may require every religious assembly, meeting for instruction and prayer, to have lessons of moral duty and allegiance taught them, and to have prayers offered up for the governors in times of prosperity and peace, may they not also when any calamity or danger attends the state or nation, by war, famine, pestilence, tumults, &c. I say, may they not at such seasons appoint a certain day or hours of the day for worshipping assemblies, each to address their God in a way of prayer*, that these dangers may be prevented, or these calamities removed? Such a civil appointment does not so much as pretend to make the day sacred, and I think it cannot be reasonably scrupled by persons of any religion upon that account.

V. I have turned this question on all sides in my thoughts, and I cannot at present see any criminal imposition upon conscience in such demands of the government: For if the day which happens to be appointed by the magistrate for such a purpose, is held sacred by any religious party in the land, yet surely prayers for the welfare of the state and the nation can never be sinfully offered up upon such a sacred day, that is, it can be no profanation of the day to make such addresses to God. And on the other hand, if the day be not held sacred, the hours appointed to this service are not to be supposed to ingross so much time as to hinder them from the businesses of the

* Lest it should be objected here, that no magistrate may appoint idolaters on any day to worship idols or false gods, I would say, that the form of the proclamation or public command, should only in general express the worship of God, which if any heathen subjects apply to false gods, the magistrate is not to blame, in my opinion.

civil life, beyond what is required by the necessities of the state, or the obligation of the people to promote the public welfare.

VI. And if seasons of prayer may be commanded by the government in cases of public calamity or danger, we may by the same reason conclude also, that seasons of public thanksgiving may be appointed upon any national occasion of returning thanks for public health, peace, and plenty, or special deliverance from distress or danger: Always provided that every religious assembly be permitted to worship their God in their own way and manner on such appointed seasons; for those actions of thanksgiving seem to be a part of natural social religion, in which the welfare of the state is concerned.

Perhaps it will be objected here, that by this rule our king *James* the second, might appoint a day of prayer against king *William*, or the prince of *Orange*, when he came really for the deliverance of the nation from tyranny; or he might appoint a thanksgiving for the birth of the spurious prince of *Wales* or the pretender; for princes will make themselves judges when occurrences are national dangers or benefits.

Answer. Where such things happen, every single person must be a judge of his own actions according to conscience, and must never trifle with God to obey the commands of a king; nor will the commands of a king lay any obligations on conscience in such cases, where it is dubious on which side the true welfare of the nation stands. But in all cases where the danger or the benefit of a nation is most apparent and certain, and universally agreed, I think a prince may require the religious assistance of the people for the civil welfare.

VII. And perhaps it may not be unlawful, for the civil power to lay some small penalty upon those, who without just excuse wilfully and rebelliously oppose or renounce any such religious services for the state, that is, in cases of most apparent danger or blessing: And perhaps a heavier penalty may be appointed for such obstinate and stubborn spirits, as will boldly transact any thing in public, in such a way of sport or labour, &c. which will be a manifest and public hinderance to the sacred offices required by the magistrate, on the days appointed for public prayer or thankfulness.

We find the king of *Nineveh*, who was a heathen, was led by the light of nature to appoint, in a very strict manner, such a day of humiliation and prayer throughout the city, when they were in imminent danger of destruction under the threatenings of God, by the mouth of *Jonah* his prophet, *Jonah* iii. 5 — 10. And as the light of nature and reason seem to dictate it, so the success of it was agreeable to their desires, and the threatened desolation was prevented.

Whether the king had a right to command the ceremonies of sackcloth and ashes indeed may bear a dispute: But so far as I can see, their "crying mightily unto their god," on some appointed day, might be a very lawful and proper command from their king, as a father and protector of the people, and I should think the people might be bound to obey it.

But still, as I said before, it must be in such cases, only, where they are satisfied the true interest and welfare of the nation demands it. In dubious cases every man must have leave to judge for himself, and no man's conscience should be bound to pray for those things which he believes in his heart to be a public grievance or danger, or to pray against what he believes to be a public blessing, however the civil powers may enjoin or require it.

VIII. Here

VIII. Here then it will be said, if the magistrate may forbid any thing that gives public interruption to the solemnity of such national fasting or thanksgiving days by laws and penalties, in evident cases of national dangers or blessings, or may he not by laws and penalties forbid also the common labours or sports of men on those days, which he himself believes sacred to God and religion?

This argument may be further enforced thus: In a christian country, where prince and people are chiefly christians, may not the prince forbid all his subjects, whether christians or pagans, *turks* or *jews*, to labour or sport publicly on the first day of the week, since it is manifest that the indulgence of such sports or labours on that day would be an offence and a snare to the christians, a means of corrupting their children and families, &c. and hinder them in the learning or the celebration of the christian religion? To answer this question impartially,

IX. Answer. Let us turn the tables, and suppose the ruling powers, and the greatest part of the people to be *mabometans*; and then enquire, whether they may not command every person of what religion soever, to abstain from all public sports and labours on a *friday*, because it is manifest that the indulgence of them would be an offence to *mabometans*, and a means of hindering their children and families from the learning or celebration of some parts of the *mabometan* worship. If this be allowed, it is certain, whatsoever a *mabometan* prince has a right to do in his own country, a christian prince has a right to do the same in his.

But unless this prohibition of public sports and labours on any certain day, can be reasonably construed to the natural and civil welfare of the state or the people, it may be doubted whether any prince, either heathen, christian, or *mabometan*, has a right to forbid any of his people to get their livelihood by public labour one day in a week, merely because it is accounted religious and sacred, by him and the greatest part of his subjects. I say, this may be doubted and would bear a dispute, nor will I pretend to determine here absolutely on this argument.

X. Therefore I add further: God himself when he was king of the *Jews*, or their civil ruler, appointed one day in seven, that is, *saturday* or their sabbath, as a proper season for the natural rest and repose of animals, both of man and beast, as well as for his own worship in public assemblies, and that under severe penalties; and the stranger within the gates was obliged to submit to it.

It is true, the great God well knew that one day in seven was the most proper and just proportion of time for the rest and repose of animal nature, and for the celebration of public religion: And therefore princes and states who know this, should appoint the same proportion. But since God as the king of the *jews*, appointed this seventh day, there seems to be some reason for us to say, that even princes who know not this divine appointment, may assume this authority to require their subjects to devote one day in seven, or ten, or twelve to the rest and repose of nature, for the God of nature has informed us by the fourth commandment, this is for the good of the people: And the prince may forbid, at least, all public labours on that day, and public diversions too, that all his subjects may have leisure, and may be encouraged to maintain and practise some religion, and to pay some public worship to their God without interruption or molestation. This seems also to be needful for the civil interest of the state or the whole people, as has been proved before.

But as this day was *saturday* when God was the king of the *Jews*, so in a *mabometan* country this day will be *friday*; in a christian nation it will be *sunday*; in heathen nations perhaps other days would be appointed, and it is impossible in this case to gratify every religious sect or party in a nation.

XI. Now

XI. Now if any weekly day whatsoever, be devoted to natural rest or to the worship of a god in a country, as it serves the natural or civil interest of mankind, surely that very day seems most proper which the bulk of the people shall chuse, and especially if both the rulers and the majority of the people agree in the same; even though the reason of their agreement is because they think it sacred to religion: Nor have the lesser sects or parties any reason to complain, that for the general good they are forbid public labours or sports one day in a week. Upon this foot I think the penal prohibition of public sports, labour or traffick on *sundays* in a christian country may be vindicated.

But if any particular sects think other days more sacred than those which are appointed by the government, they should never be constrained to work or labour on those days, except the necessity of the state require it, as I have before shewn.

XII. These are some of the powers, which I think a prince or a ruler may lay claim to in every religious society. And perhaps there may be yet a further right that the supreme civil power may have in religious societies, viz. wheresoever there is any colour or ground for suspicion that the members of these societies are doing any thing to the detriment of the public peace, there the prince may require the presence of some civil officer to inspect and see that nothing be done contrary to the welfare of the state: Always requiring at the same time that this officer make no manner of disturbance in the religious practices of this society, where the offices of the civil government are not invaded, nor the public peace injured. If the prince has a right to do this in any other societies, where he has reason to suspect sedition, why may he not do it in religious societies also?

XIII. There are some other instances of power in things sacred which princes have claimed; and even some of the best of our former writers in speaking of these matters, have allowed more power to civil governors in such points, than either reason or scripture will support. They have permitted princes to call and dismiss or conclude synods for settling religious controversies, to direct their meetings and to preside over them; some have authorized them to adjust what crimes shall be subjected to church-censures, and what not, as well as to execute those censures: They have given them power to determine circumstances in divine worship and to regulate all things of outward mode, form and ceremony, relating to order and decency, &c. But I can find no sufficient ground to justify these pretences either in reason or scripture*.

XIV. I know it will be objected here, that those few rights and powers, which I have allowed to princes and states, do not arise to the notion of an established church: But in every nation, there must be some establishment of religion, say they, there must be some national church, or settled worship appointed by the state, without which religion cannot subsist.

Answer. No particular religion or worship can be fully established by civil powers without some sort of penalties, on those people or officers who comply not with it; and

* That excellent writer baron *Puffendorf* has fallen into these few mistakes, in that valuable little discourse of his concerning "the relation between church and state; or how far the christian and civil life affect each other:" Which was translated with an excellent preface, written by Mr. *Barbeyrac*, and printed in *english* by *John Watts* at the rose in *St. Paul's church yard* 1719. These chief mistakes or faults may be found from the forty-fifth to the fiftieth section. I could not comply with these opinions, when I read it many years ago: Otherwise I think it is the best book that ever I met with on this subject; and the principles on which it is written, do not only give us a happy clue for the justest sentiments in this controversy, but even contradict and overturn those very mistakes of the author, which he hath slid into for want of care and attention in those sections which are most exceptionable.

and is it not this very doctrine of the necessity of an established religion, and an established church, which has fixed so many wicked and mischievous religions throughout the world, and which hath excluded the only true religion of *Christ* and the new testament, out of most of the nations of the earth in former and later ages? And shall christian and protestant rulers, think that thing so necessary in civil government, which is liable to such horrid consequences, and which they so much complain of in all other rulers; as being highly injurious to God and men, and to the religion of the blessed *Jesus*.

XV. And I cannot but remark here, that there are many persons highly zealous for an established religion, who are ever urging the pattern of the primitive churches, and especially that of the three first centuries, as the standard and rule to which our present christianity should be reduced, in discipline and worship: They are ever informing us what a glorious thing the christian religion was in those days, how divinely the church flourished, and grew in piety and devotion, as well as in numbers, and in every spiritual grace and beauty.

We allow this account of the glory of those early churches, and the beauty of holiness, and the amazing success of the gospel which was found among them, though we cannot admit all their practices to be a perfect rule or standard of christianity, which honour belongs only to the new testament. But let those persons remember that in those three first centuries there was no such thing as a church established by law; and then let all those glories be confessed to belong to the christian church, when it had no national establishment, no royal supports, no settled revenues, no civil power to aggrandize and to adorn it: And let it be remembered too, that when it became an established church under the emperor *Constantine* and his successors, its true glory and spiritual beauty and excellence by degrees faded away, and was almost lost by the visible powers, pomp and honours attending this very establishment.

The church of *Christ* in the new testament, is built on such a foundation, that it wants nothing of civil power to support it, besides the mere protection of the state, which every christian society may require and expect in common with every other society of men, who are good subjects, and pay all due allegiance to the state in which they dwell.

C O N C L U S I O N.

I. **T**HUS I have given a short account of my best sentiments, how far any sort of public assemblies for hearing lectures on divine, civil, or moral subjects, or the public preaching or celebration of peculiar religions, may be safely established by the state; how far some public worship may be required in general, and especially on particular occasions of the public interest of the state, and how far the people are required to pay their attendance. But I cannot find any sufficient power in the state or government to oblige the nation or particular persons in it under penalties to any form of worship. If I have in any thing exceeded the bounds of the just and reasonable rights of government, or too much limited the just and natural liberties or conscience of mankind, either princes or people, I shall be glad to be better informed in a spirit of meekness and charity, which generally attends the spirit of wisdom and truth.

II. The only maxim by which I have conducted my sentiments through all this scheme, is this, that the power of civil government reaches no further than the preservation of the natural and civil welfare, rights and properties of mankind with regard

gard to this world, and has nothing to do with religion further than this requires : But the special rights of conscience, and the things of religion, as they relate to another world, belong to God only. And the gospel of *Christ* does not pretend to erect a kingdom of this world, and therefore it alters nothing in the nature of civil government; " but leaves to *Cæsar* the things which are *Cæsar's*. *Matth.* xxii. 21.

III. There may be many things which a zealous christian ruler might think very proper to be done for the honour of his God and his Saviour in the public world, and in the management of the state; and indeed he may do much for God in reforming a sinful land; yet in the peculiarities of christianity, I find nothing that can be required or imposed by civil authority, without intrenching upon the rights or liberties of mankind: And I was not willing to indulge any thing to be imposed upon heathen subjects by christian governors, which may not also be counted reasonable and lawful for a heathen governor to impose upon christians; because the religion of *Christ* makes no change in the nature of civil power.

IV. Nor do I know how to vindicate a christian state in propagating their own religion by any such methods of compulsion or penalty, which a heathen state might not also use for the support and encouragement of their's: And therefore I cannot see it lawful for any civil power in christendom to suppress the publication of any new, strange, or foreign sects or parties in religion, where they promise and pay due allegiance to the rulers, support the government, maintain the public peace, and molest not the state: Nor do I see good reason to make any such laws, or execute any such punishments against the peaceable preachers of any sect or party, which we christians should have thought unreasonable or unlawful for the civil powers of *Athens* to have made and executed against *St. Paul*, when in the midst of a heathen nation on *Mars-hill* he preached *Jesus* and the resurrection. *Acts* xvii. 22. In all our reasonings and writings on this important subject, let us take heed to allow no such power or dominion to men, which would have excluded the best of religions, that is, the religion of *Christ* out of the world.

V. I know it has been said upon these occasions, that the christian magistrate has right to persecute or suppress the pagan religion, because it is false, whereas the pagan magistrate has no right to suppress christianity, because it is true: And though these pretences to truth may be contended on both sides, yet since one may be proved to be true and the other to be false, truth has always a right on it's side which falsehood can never have. I answer,

Answer. Every one who sets up for a persecutor, will pretend he is orthodox, and has the right on his side, and there is no common supreme court of judicature that can decide this matter, till the supreme judge of all appears in the last great day: And therefore since the pretences on either side are not sufficient to determine the justice of the persecution, or suppression of the other side, and since there is no common supreme court to which they can both appeal in this world, it follows evidently that each profession must allow liberty and toleration to the other, where the welfare of the state is secure, and brought into no danger by the practices of the inferior party. I might on this occasion, recommend a book of *Mr. Bayle's*, intitled " a philosophical commentary on *Luke* xiv. 23. compel them to come in," written in two volumes octavo, wherein after he has gone through all the controversy about persecution, he adds a supplement to prove heretics have as much right to persecute the orthodox, as the orthodox have to persecute them.

T H E

T H E
A P P E N D I X,

Wherein, the same sentiments of just liberty are confirmed by
a view of the origin of a christian church.

I. **T**H E foregoing discourse was begun by tracing out the origin of civil government, and thence inferring the several rights and powers of it, and enquiring how far they would reach in any of the affairs of a religious society, and particularly of a christian church.

Let us now take a short survey of the origin of christian churches, and enquire whether the setting things in this view will afford any different lights or inferences concerning the power of civil magistrates in things sacred.

II. When the christian religion was first planted, almost all the states, kingdoms and governments of this world were heathens: Even *Palesine* itself had heathen governors. The blessed apostles travelling amongst the nations, and preaching the gospel wheresoever they could find opportunity, converted multitudes of single persons to the christian faith; these united themselves in little societies by agreement, to assemble together at certain seasons, and worship God by the apostles directions through *Jesus Christ*.

III. In some of those same cities wherein christianity was preached, there were or might be also several other societies of men under the same civil government, united together by peculiar agreements among themselves for different purposes, but all subject to the rulers of the state in matters of civil government.

Let us now suppose for instance, in the city of *Corinth* there might be a "college of philosophers, a society of painters or antiquaries, a synagogue of *Jews*, an assembly of deists, and a church of christians."

IV. Each of these being voluntary societies, they have complete liberty and power to chuse their own presidents, teachers, and other officers out of their own body, as they stood in need of them, in order to regulate the affairs of their society: And they themselves contrive and agree upon rules and laws for the government of their own society, viz. upon what terms persons shall be admitted as members, for what reasons they shall be suspended for a season, or cast out utterly; what times, and places they shall meet in, what forms or ceremonies they shall use in any of their practices, what sum of money, or what utensils, or what goods, or support, or what

proportion of these things each member shall furnish or supply toward the general design of the society, and what shall be the business of every member.

These things, I say, must be agreed by the members of the society, but all in a constant consistence with the civil laws of the state, and the civil rights and liberties of every subject of it.

Note, Wheresoever their original founder hath left them certain rules and directions, it is supposed they all consent to submit to them.

V. Now to apply all this to christianity. The chief and most important things in the christian society were appointed by *Christ* and his apostles, their first founders, as praying, preaching the gospel, singing, baptism, the Lord's supper, &c. Other circumstances which were not appointed by the apostles, and which yet were necessary to be determined some one way, these were probably and naturally left to be determined by the common consent and agreement of the church, for their mutual conveniency and general edification; such as, the hour of their worship, the place of their meeting, &c. As for other circumstances which were not necessary to be determined one way, such as their common habits, their gestures, &c. these were generally left indifferent to every worshipper; always provided they acted agreeably to the common light of nature and reason of things, becoming the sacred solemnity of worship, and in a consistence with the interest of the state.

I say, it seems most probable that the determination of these things was left to the public agreement of the people, or to their private liberty: But if any persons shall suppose, they were left to be determined by the rulers or officers of the church, I will not by any means debate that matter here; it is enough for my purpose, if it be acknowledged, these things were left to be agreed upon or determined by the church itself, either the people, or their officers in that society, and not by their civil governors*.

VI. Yet still let it be remembered that the power of the state or the civil government, is supreme over all these societies and their officers, in all things which relate to the peace and welfare of the nation or the city; and none of them have any right to make any laws, agree upon any rules, or do any thing contrary to the good of the city, or the civil government.

As for instance, if the college of philosophers, profess and maintain the opinion of a public community of wives, or of exposing or murdering their children, if the synagogue of the *Jews* should refuse to give any pledges of their allegiance to heathen governors, if the christians should pretend that civil dominion is founded in divine grace, or that the saints, that is, the christians, should rise and take the city, or that no faith is to be kept with heretics; or if any of these societies should profess and maintain the right of persecuting or punishing any other society for their peculiar sentiments or practices, which affect not the state or the public good, they themselves may lawfully be sent out of the city, and be banished from the protection of the civil government, for these things are contrary to the public welfare.

Or if any of the members of any of these societies, should be guilty of crimes that are inconsistent with the peace of mankind or welfare of the state, viz. murder, drunkenness, stealing, cheating, slander, sedition, treason, &c. they may be punished

* I have no concern here in that famous question, whether a christian church must be governed by an episcopal person, or bishop in the way of monarchy, or by a synod of presbyters in a way of aristocracy, or by the vote of the people in a way of democracy: But it is evident, that the civil powers, of what form soever they be, have no just right or authority to govern the church in things sacred.

nished by the state according to the laws of the land, without any consideration what other society they belong to, or any regard to it.

But I would proceed yet further here, and add, that if any of these societies should presume to punish any of their own members with the loss of life or limb, or seizing their property, or in any manner which is inconsistent with the peace or welfare of the state, these members so punished, or any others for them, may make complaint to the civil rulers, and these civil rulers have a right to restrain these particular societies from inflicting such punishments, and they have a right also to punish those that inflict them according to the laws of the land; for it is their proper business to see that no member of the state be injured in life, liberty or property.

Hence it follows, that these particular societies have no right or power to punish those whom their own particular laws only may call criminal, except with such small fines, inconveniencies, or dishonours as their offending members, willingly submit to, or by sharp reproofs, or by suspending them for a season from their meetings, or casting them utterly out of their society; but they have no power nor right to call in the civil arm to punish them for such sort of faults. Indeed if their crime be such as affects the common welfare of the state, or peace of mankind, they may not only be expelled out of that society in particular, by the members of it, for all such societies should suffer nothing among them contrary to the peace or welfare of the state: But they should also be cited before the civil magistrate, in order to be punished as the laws of the land direct.

And if I were to speak here peculiarly of the christian church, I would say, that it has no power to punish it's own officers or members according to scripture, for any crime whatsoever, but one of these three ways, viz. by an admonition or reproof given publicly in the church, by suspension or exclusion from the office they bore therein, or from the communion of the church for a season, or by utter exclusion of them from the church, which is called excommunication: And the civil magistrate may punish the same persons, if their crimes affect the public welfare, with death or imprisonment, or any other civil penalty which the law of the land appoints.

VII. If nothing be found in any of these societies or their members, contrary to the interests of the state or welfare of the people, then they may by their professed allegiance to the state, claim protection of the state; the rulers of the state have no proper power nor authority to hinder them from meeting in their several societies, which were instituted for different purposes, but they are bound to defend them as good subjects. Nor have magistrates any power to determine the greater or the lesser offices, rules, actions, circumstances, or any affairs relating purely to these distinct societies: They have no power to appoint the painters, who shall be their president, or when they shall meet, or what sort of pencils, or what colours they shall use; nor have the rulers of the state any right to require the philosophers to change any of their opinions, or to read *Plato*, or *Zeno*, or *Aristotle*, or to alter the course of their lectures; nor can they impose rules on the assembly of deists, when to sit, or stand, or kneel; nor should they command the *Jews* when they shall wash themselves, or what flesh they shall eat; nor impose upon the christians, who shall be their teachers, or what habits or garments they shall wear, or what gestures they shall use in their preaching or singing, or any other parts of their worship. In these things the state has no power to interpose, where the public welfare of the city or nation receives no danger or damage.

VIII. It is granted indeed, that if the necessity or welfare of any such city or state require that foreign silk shall not be worn, nor any foreign paper be used, in order to encourage a national manufacture, or that no person shall appear without a woollen garment upon them, to promote the breeding of sheep, or that veal shall not be eaten, nor calves be slain for a twelvemonth, in order to maintain a breed of cattle after a great murrain, &c. All these societies ought to submit their particular rules and their personal liberty to these laws of the state, and to comply with them as the state enjoins. But where the affairs, exigencies or benefits of the state do not require such commands or prohibitions, these private societies and their actions are not to be modelled and determined by the mere humour, or caprice, or arbitrary will of a magistrate.

IX. Perhaps you will say, are not civil magistrates to be obeyed "in omnibus licitis & honestis," that is, "in all things that are lawful and honest?" And if magistrates require several of these particular actions or circumstances of action to be performed according to their will in these several societies, ought not the societies to obey them, provided there is nothing commanded but what is honest and lawful? To this I answer,

X. Answer. That I have read of an oath of obedience "in omnibus licitis & honestis," "in all things lawful and honest," required and imposed by ecclesiastical superiors, whether justly or no, I say not; but I never knew that this was the just limitation of obedience due to civil powers: For since the authority of the civil power reaches only to the common welfare and safety of the state and people, the sworn obedience of subjects can be required only in things that relate to the welfare of the people and the state.

I never heard that those famous words loyalty and allegiance which are so often used in our nation, signified any more than our obligation and our readiness to obey the supreme power in things of a civil nature, required by the laws of the land. Now the laws are all made, or are supposed to be made, for the good of the people and the safety of the state. Note, in this safety of the state is also included the honour due to the rulers, for if due honour be not paid to the ruling powers, it endangers the safety of the state.

XI. Let it be further considered also, that in the original compact between the government and the governed, the governed do not consent to part with any liberties of human nature, but only so far as is necessary for civil government and their common protection, security and peace. They are bound therefore to obey, not "in omnibus licitis & honestis, but "in omnibus quæ ad reipublicæ salutem." Can we suppose that when the people swear allegiance to governors, they mean to give them power over all their private and domestic affairs and actions, or the circumstances of them, over their conduct in labour or study, in trade or recreations, and left themselves or their families no liberty of going out or in, when they pleased, or wearing short coats or long, red or blue, of eating bread or flesh or herbs as they thought proper, or dining or supping at a round table or a square one, upon a dish of turnips or a haunch of venison?

And if the people never gave up their liberties in these affairs to the rulers of the state, then the rulers never had a right to claim such obedience: And if they have no right to determine such sort of things, in natural and private life in families, or in any voluntary societies, I know not what divine or human reason they can have to claim this right in religious societies or in churches: Surely they can have

no

no such pretence, except where the people or the laws have given them such a claim ; and after all, whether such laws are good and just may deserve a debate.

XII. Let the christian church in *Corinth* therefore be esteemed but as one of the rest of these human voluntary societies, and it may subsist well enough in a heathen state, if the governors do but merely protect their faithful subjects, and do not stretch their authority into the affairs of religion, which is beyond it's proper extent. *Gallio* the deputy of *Acbaia*, had some good notion of this matter in *St. Paul's* time, when he would take no cognizance of words and names and questions about the *jewish* religion, but only about matters of civil wrong or wicked lewdness : But he was much to blame, even according to his own principles, that he did not keep the public peace, and protect *Softbenes* from the mob, " whether he were a *jew* or a heathen or a christian," *Acts* xviii. 12—17. For this was the proper province of a magistrate to interpose in matters of civil wrong or injury.

All that the christian church or any other peaceable society can claim from the state, is protection ; and this protection is sufficient to guard them from all disturbance of their peace by men of violence, or harlequins and scaramouches, or any other intruder into their assemblies, chairs or pulpits, besides those whom the society appoints : For if such complaints be made by the society to the magistrate, he has a right to restrain by prison or proper penalties. Such invaders of the public peace, as trespass upon the innocent employment, the ground, possessions and properties of their neighbours ; and he is bound to do it as a guardian of the public peace : Nor should any pretence of conscience screen the offender in such cases ; nor can the magistrate fulfil his duty without securing an impartial liberty, safety and protection to every loyal assembly, whether it be appointed for music or painting, philosophy or worship.

It should also be added here, that if any persons who are secluded or cast-out from these societies, by the rules and vote of the society, will yet obstinately enter in upon their ground, and mix with them in their common acts of instruction, practice, worship, &c. so as to give society any disturbance ; it is the business and duty of the civil magistrate, upon proper application made, to guard every innocent society of loyal subjects from such inroads, injuries and disturbances ; and that even in their festivals, or recreations, as well as their solemnities or common employments.

Thus far shall suffice to shew the right of a christian church, to be secured from injuries and impositions in common with any other innocent and voluntary societies.

XIII. Now let it be supposed, that some of the civil governors of *Corinth*, should join themselves to any of these societies, whether philosophers, antiquaries, painters, deists, or christians, would there be any sufficient reason why they should be turned out of their posts in the government, because they are become christians, or become antiquaries or philosophers, &c. supposing still that they fulfil the offices of their magistracy with honour ?

And much less reason is there, why there should be a law made to seclude them from their civil offices, and lay a public brand or infamy upon them, because they join themselves to particular societies which do not in the least interfere with civil government : Supposing always that in these societies, there is nothing dishonourable or scandalous, which would vilify and debase the dignity of a ruler ; and evidently endanger the welfare of the state.

XIV. Yet no ruler in the *corinthian* state, who joins himself to any of these particular societies, has any authority or power to alter the special laws of that society, or to prescribe new rules or practices to it : For he is taken into the society but as a
single

single member, and has but his single vote, and consequently has no further right nor authority to introduce any one rule or mode, form or ceremony into the college of philosophers, the society of painters, or the christian church. All the civil power which he carries with him, reaches no further than to see that nothing be done in any of these societies inconsistent with the good of the state.

XV. When a chief civil ruler becomes a member of any of these societies, he gains thereby an opportunity of knowing thoroughly all the affairs of the society, and of observing whether there can be any special benefit, damage or danger to the state, arising from all the opinions and practices thereof. So far it may be beneficial to the state.

And it is certain, this civil ruler may be beneficial to the particular society of which he is a member, if he be rich or great, by procuring for them, or bestowing upon them halls for lectures, mansions for the professors, or chapels for their christian worship, schools for philosophical experiments or painting exercises, &c. and perhaps he may procure civil immunities and advantages for them, that is, such as add no tax or burden, or inconvenience to the state: And he may favour the christian church or the *jewish* synagogue if he pleases, so far as to appoint no civil or military duties at the same hours, which would interfere with christian or *jewish* worship in the city of *Corinth*.

XVI. Thus there are some advantages which may accrue to the state, and some to the church, whereof the chief magistrates are members, and that without any such alliance between church and state, as some have supposed necessary for the security of both.

But if the advances in temporal things, which the church receives from the state, be not well guarded and limited, the church will grow more earthly, but the state will not grow more holy or heavenly: The church will be in danger of losing it's humility, piety, and purity, and the state will run a great hazard of being made mere servants or slaves to the church. Frequent and long experience has taught the world this sad truth. Again,

XVII. Let us make a farther supposition that both the people and the rulers should be so much in love with the sentiments and practices of the philosophers, the antiquaries, the deists, or the christians, as that the bulk of them should become members of their colleges, societies, or churches: Still the civil power would reach no further than the welfare of the state of *Corinth*. The churches and other societies must still determine for themselves the rules and circumstances of actions that relate to the design of their assembly, whether the rulers of the state vote for it or no; and every society may make such laws for itself and it's own members as it pleases, in things wherein the good or hurt of the state have no concern.

XVIII. Here I know it will be objected, that this is setting up "a dominion within a dominion," or "imperium in imperio," which politicians have usually thought dangerous. But I think it may be sufficiently replied in answer to this difficulty,

Reply. That if every such society keep itself within it's own bounds, and meddle with nothing relating to the state; and if the civil magistrate has the supreme power and dominion even over all these societies, so far as to secure what relates to the civil welfare, the peace of mankind, and the safety of government, there can be no inconvenience or danger in giving a full and complete toleration protection and liberty to any such societies. What detriment can any civil government be exposed to by a master ruling his own family, by his own private laws, or by a tutor or president of a college, who governs his own academy and students by appointed rules of his own, still

still supposing they meddle not with state-affairs, nor obstruct the public peace or government, but conform to the laws of the state.

XIX. And if the forms of government in the city of *Corinth*, should change from aristocracy to monarchy or democracy, or if it mould itself into any other form, still these societies of christians and philosphers, deists, antiquaries, or painters might be safe in the enjoyment of their proper liberties, and the state suffer not the least inconvenience by them.

XX. Perhaps it will be enquired here, if the bulk of the people of a nation together with their rulers embrace the christian faith, may they not be esteemed as a christian state, and may not the whole nation, be considered both as members of the civil state and of the christian church, and be governed by christian rulers, as officers both of the church and state, and be ruled promiscuously by their laws and sanctions of rewards and penalties both in things sacred and civil? And may it not be maintained as a mixed government or establishment of church and state without any great distinction between them. I answer,

XXI. Answer I. First, when things of so very different a nature are mixed and blended together, it is most likely it will bring a medley of confusions into both: When we unite and mingle ideas so distinct as civil government and religion, as the laws and rights of God and of *Cæsar*, as persons and ordinances temporal and spiritual, as powers sacred and human, as the concerns of the soul and the body, as the things of this world and the things of the world to come, it will be exceeding hard to reason and judge aright concerning the conduct proper to both, or to either of them, and it will be almost impossible to determine and maintain their just limits and boundaries: It will introduce such a perplexity of things, as will scarce allow sufficient grounds to judge, when or how far, one inroads on the other, and to correct any mistakes, irregularities or unhappy consequences, which may be derived and grow from this unnatural mixture. In the second place therefore,

XXII. Answer II. Since we cannot so well reason and determine upon things when in such a confusion, let us reflect what hath been the real effect where such sort of mixtures have been practised. Thus it has been of old, when *roman* emperors lent the bishops their secular power, and the bishops gave them a right to call synods, to preside in them, to determine affairs in the church.

Thus it has been done in many of the popish states and kingdoms, where bishops have been the chief rulers in the state: But if we enquire of our ancestors in this nation when it was all subject to popery, or if we survey the popish nations of *Europe*, and observe their mixture of civil and sacred powers, what can we find derived from it but frequent usurpation of civil power in things sacred, or of ecclesiastical power in things civil, and yet generally such a mutual agreement will be made between civil and ecclesiastical rulers, by some superiorities on one side or the other, as to keep the persons and consciences of the common people in deep bondage? This odd mixture has produced infinite confusion and mischief, both in church and state; it has brought in wars and slaughters, inquisitions and bloody persecutions, loss of all piety and goodness, burning zeal, blindness, hypocrisy and superstition, slavery of souls and bodies, and fraud and violence without end.

XXIII. Never did the alwise God mingle sacred and civil power throughout any national government but that of the *Jews*, where he himself was both the political and ecclesiastical head, the God of the church, and the king of the state. Scarce are these mixtures safe in any other hand but his. When in later ages some of their high priests the successors of the *maccabees*, grew up to be kings, and God their
preme

preme king withdrew from them his divine influences, and his kind superintendency, what terrible confusion, barbarity, and madness were sometimes found among them?

XXIV. And I might add, that such dangerous mixtures as these in every popish state or government, where there is no toleration nor liberty allowed to other christians, who would maintain the purity of their religion; these, I say, are the very composition of the feet and toes of *Nebuchadnezzar's* great image in *Daniel* chapter ii. which were made part of potter's clay and part of iron*: These may try to mix, but they will not well cleave to one another. And if the dream of the *assyrian* king be divine, or the interpretation of the *jewish* prophet be true, these "toes and these feet, wherein the iron is mixed with miry clay, wait only for the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, to smite the huge image upon it's feet and to break it to pieces." Then the four vast monarchies of this world meet their last period, and become like the chaff of a threshing-floor, and the wind carries them away: Then shall that stone grow and fill the whole earth, and the kingdoms "of this world become the kingdom of the Lord and his *Christ*, and he shall reign for ever and ever." *Rev. xi. 15.* Amen.

* *Lowth* in his commentary on *Daniel* seems to approve entirely this exposition, for he gives no other sense of the words, verse 42. And if this were a proper place for explaining the prophecies of *Daniel* or the visions of *St. John*, chapters xiii. and xvii. I think it might be made to appear beyond all reasonable opposition, that the first head of the *roman* empire was only civil, and strong as iron, like the legs of *Nebuchadnezzar's* image: The last was part civil and part ecclesiastical; such were the feet and ten toes of this image, or the popedom with it's ten kingdoms, mingled of iron and clay, which await this final destruction.

T H E

THE
RUIN and RECOVERY

OF
MANKIND:

OR,

AN ATTEMPT to vindicate the SCRIPTURAL
ACCOUNT of these great events upon the plain
principles of REASON.

VOL. VI.

As

THE

T H E
P R E F A C E.

AMIDST the darknes of our degenerate state, God has been pleased to furnish us with two springs of light, to lead us into the knowledge of our own misery, and to direct us in the way to his favour and our happiness. These are well known by the names of reason and revelation, that is, the reason of man and the revelation of God.

Right reason is ever uniform and consistent with itself, and is the same in all ages. It was given to man at first, to teach him all that we call natural religion; and even now, in it's diminished glory, it gives sufficient evidence of our ruin, and assures us feelingly of our universal degeneracy, our lost innocency and peace: It affords us also many hints of the favourable condescensions of divine mercy, the necessity of our repentance of sin, and our trust in divine grace, in order to our recovery.

It is granted that the dictates of reason amongst the various tribes and generations of fallen mankind, have been mingled with a thousand prejudices, weakneses and wanderings, with the mistakes of fancy, and the follies of superstition; and at best it has not been found of itself practically sufficient to instruct us in all things that relate to our salvation: Yet still, reason is a light given us by God himself, and it has very much to do in our direction toward our present duty and our final felicity.

But since our reason is so defective, both in it's discovery of our ruin and our restoration, God has been pleased to teach in a more immediate manner by the light of revelation, and has given to mankind early discoveries of his mind and will before scripture was written, and then by *Moses* and other holy writers, he has furnished them with knowledge of their original apostasy from God, their guilt and wretchedness; and he has been ever since leading them onwards by different steps or degrees towards the full discovery of his will and their salvation by *Jesus Christ*, the mediator.

And since the revelations of God to men, have been so very early and various, and have been delivered to us by different persons, and in different ages, there may be some difficulties arising from this variety: There may be some seeming inconsistencies between the several parts of it, and some supposed oppositions to the light of reason: Yet it is certain that the two only lights which God has favoured us with in order to learn his will and our duty, can never contradict themselves, nor each other. There is not any one part of divine revelation which is really inconsistent with reason, or with any other parts of revelation itself. There is certainly a glorious connexion and divine harmony between them all, and all join together to make up one complete

scheme, gradually advancing to perfection, and terminating and centering at last in our full recovery, to the favour and image of God by the promised *Messiah* or Saviour.

Now as the revelation of God in an illustrious manner supplies the deficiencies of our reason, and enlightens our natural darkness in the knowledge of divine things, so the exercise of our reasoning powers is very necessary to assist us not only in the understanding of the several parts of revelation, but in reconciling them to each other as well as to the dictates of right reason. It is our reason which shews us this blessed harmony.

If it should be found, that in my sentiments on this subject I have followed no human scheme, no established system, no hypothesis of any contending party, let it be known that my studies have been more engaged in meditation, than in reading controversies; reason and the bible were the only springs whence I derived my sentiments, and the only tests by which I tried them, and not the authority of any great name, or any sect or party among men. Therefore if any reader is determined already to believe nothing but what is perfectly conformable to some favourite system, or the opinions of the party, which he has chosen for his test of truth and error, I shall not court his favour, nor be greatly moved by his censure.

But if I have been so happy as to set these truths, which scripture has revealed concerning our misery and divine mercy, in so favourable a light, as to make it evident to well-disposed impartial readers, how far they are supported by reason itself, and to discover and maintain this agreement between these two different manifestations of God to men, I have attained my end: If I have been enabled in any measure to render these sacred truths more intelligible and more credible to the sincere enquirers after truth, and to relieve the divine revelations of scripture, against the cavils of an age which greatly pretends to reason, I shall account my labour well employed.

The devil will have no longer cause to triumph in the assurance of his attacks against scripture, nor shall the christian want matter for his satisfaction and joy, when he sees his divine religion vindicated by the powers of reason.

My chief design, and that which has regulated all my meditations and reasonings, is to establish and confirm what appears to me to be plain matter of fact, in the sinful and miserable circumstances of all the children of *Adam* by nature, and their hopes of recovery by divine grace, so far as either the light of nature or scripture would assist me, and to vindicate the moral perfections of God, his holiness, justice, and goodness in his works of providence and grace, or in his whole government of the world.

The ground-work of my scheme is laid in the original rectitude of man, and his early degeneracy into sin and misery; and I have drawn from the mere light of nature, sufficient proof and evidence of both these.

If what has been said in answer to the first question, does not sufficiently prove the doctrine of original sin from the universal sinfulness and misery of mankind, I hope the first essay in the appendix will do it; the first part whereof represents that subject more largely, as it relates to the misery of man, and the latter end of it briefly enforces the argument from his universal sinfulness, both by reason and scripture. The reader is desired to forgive the repetition of a few sentiments which are set in various lights, especially considering that this essay was first designed only for a philosophical enquiry or amusement, and not to take its place in this book.

It would have been needless labour to enter into any examination of the learned doctor *Wetby's* scheme published in his writings, and to answer all his objections
about

about original sin, imputed or inherent: For if the facts which I recite concerning the sinful nature and wretched circumstances of mankind, even from their infancy, are found by constant experience and observation to be true, then a great part of his scheme vanishes and dies as a matter of mere mistake in fact: And if my scheme or hypothesis for the solution of the difficulties which attend this doctrine, is supported by reason and scripture, then his objections against it must fall of course. No objection against a certain truth can ever be valid or strong, though at first view it may appear ever so plausible. And I thought this to be the plainest and shortest way of writing and reasoning, and not to embarrass my readers more than was necessary with the perplexities of controversial writings on so difficult a subject*.

Besides all this I add, that though a considerable part of that writer's objections against original sin may lie heavy on some defenders of it, yet those difficulties are utterly precluded by the hypothesis which I have proposed in the last question.

What that very learned author has drawn out of the fathers with much labour and criticism, let it fall on either side of the controversy, will have but small force to move any man who considers these two things.

1. How little we can suppose to learn of the certain doctrines of *Christ* and his apostles, with any exactness and accuracy from the mere traditions of persons who lived for the most part a hundred and fifty, two hundred, or three hundred years after them? For we have the original sacred writings as well as they; the rest is all but tradition and uncertainty.

2. When he considers that the early fathers, who wrote before these controversies arose and were debated in the church, represented their sentiments on these subjects in very loose and indeterminate language, as doctor *Whitby* himself will easily allow, and they were indeed hardly consistent with themselves, or with one another, in this as well as in many other points of opinion or doctrine. This uncertainty of their sense is the spring of many debates between doctor *Whitby* and *Gerard Vossius*.

I know some opinions will be found here, which are supposed to be borrowed from the common schemes of orthodox writers, but let them not be at once renounced with contempt and disdain †, by an age which is fond of novelty and reasoning. Perhaps there may be some reasonings here brought to support them, which have not been set in a clear and full light by former writers; and notwithstanding their old-fashioned appearances, these may be found to be divine truths.

If the reader shall meet with any new thoughts here, let not the book be at once rejected on that account: This preface intreats the author may be forgiven, who has entered into an untrodden path sometimes, not willingly, but he has been constrained to it, in order to solve such difficulties as we have never yet seen relieved to the general satisfaction of men, by all the usual and common tracks of argument. "Every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, should bring forth out of his treasure things new and old." *Matth. xiii. 52.*

If

* Yet I must confess in the second edition of this book, I have found this intermixture of objections and answers more necessary than I imagined; and that merely to keep errors from triumph, and honest readers from mistake.

† It is too frequent a custom of many readers to applaud or censure a book very highly, according to the opinion it favours, not according to the reason or argument it produces. If the opinion be agreeable to the sentiments and language of any particular party, which the reader has chosen, the arguments, though ever so common or trifling, are pronounced strong and cogent. On the other hand, if the opinion happen to be near akin to those of a contrary sect, then the arguments brought to support it are all trifling: The author is a heretic, and therefore his reasonings must needs be all weak and insufficient, if not dangerous and destructive." May divine providence deliver all that I write on deep and difficult subjects from the hand of such readers, till they are become more sincere and impartial in the search of truth!

If every person who is pleased to peruse these leaves, pays but the same high veneration to what scripture has revealed, has the same just regards to the plain dictates of right reason, the same deep sense of the difficulties which attend these enquiries, and such a constant zeal to abolish the controversies of christianity, and to reconcile contending christians, as the writer desires to have; I persuade myself there will not be many rash and sudden or severe censures pronounced upon the arguments here used, though they may not happen to convince the reader: Nor will there be many angry adversaries, or many disdainful opposers of the reconciling sentiments of this book, whether they may carry in them the appearance of being old or new.

Neither novelty nor antiquity of opinion can make any certain pretences to truth, nor can they be esteemed just prejudices against it: As there are many divine truths which have been known and acknowledged from all antiquity, so I am persuaded there are some others which have never been seen in their full force and perspicuity since the days of our Saviour and the apostles; there are some sacred verities which have had much darkness diffused around them by early corruptions of the faith, and by the controversies of succeeding ages; and these stand in need of some further light to dissipate that darkness, and restore them to their primitive perspicuity. Whether any of my attempts or labours here shall be successful for this end, must be entrusted with the judgment of the reader, and the providence of God.

And now I have proposed these thoughts to the world in hope to clear up some difficulties in our holy religion, and to shew how far our own reason may support what scripture reveals; I leave all with the public, and shall not be solicitous to support all these sentiments, or to vindicate these proposals. If any person can derive any degree of light toward his satisfaction from these papers, I shall rejoice with him. Let every one chuse what he likes, and neglect the rest. I will not persuade any man to be of my opinion till he sees reason for it; and whensoever I see reason, I shall change them myself. Our best-concerted schemes have their imperfections, and therefore I dare not assume certainty in matters of doubtful disputation: Nor do I assert or affirm several things which I have here written; for I know myself a weak fallible creature, and it is no wonder if I should fall into mistakes.

I should be glad to see a safer and more consistent scheme on these subjects proposed to the world, which may rectify all the errors of this book with convincing evidence, and scatter our darkneses like a rising sun. To cavil at particular thoughts or phrases is much easier than to form a perfect hypothesis. But it is the prerogative of the great God only to pierce through all his own infinite schemes with an unerring eye, to surround them with an all-comprehensive view, to grasp them all in one single survey, and to spread a reconciling light over all their immense varieties. Man must yet grapple with difficulties in this dusky twilight; but God in his time will irradiate the earth more plentifully with his light and truth; then darkness and contentions shall fly away for ever. Hasten, O Lord the happy day. Amen.

A D V E R-

A D V E R T I S E M E N T

Concerning the

S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

IT is no little pains that I have taken to review this book since it was printed, as well as many years before : I have read also what has been published in opposition to it, and I would ever keep my mind in such a temper, as is ready to receive the truth from every quarter, and learn my mistakes in order to amend them.

But I am not yet convinced of any errors in the great doctrines here maintained ; nor does my heart tell me, that my representation of the wretched state of mankind in it's present degenerate circumstances exceeds the truth. It is by no means true, which some have imagined, that a retirement from the world, and dwelling much among my own solitary thoughts and old authors, have led me into these melancholy and dismal apprehensions of mankind : But it is my free and public converse with the world in my earlier and more sprightly parts of life, hath given me these just and distressful views of all the race of *Adam*. Daily observation in riper years continues to assure, that there is much more folly, sin and misery among men, than I have described : Hereby my proof and evidence of some original and criminal degeneracy of the creature grows brighter and stronger, since these mischiefs could not arise merely from the immediate hand of God, as a righteous and merciful creator.

This scriptural doctrine of original sin has engaged my pen, because, in my opinion, it has a most extensive and powerful influence on several parts of practical godliness : I think a deep sense of it lays the best foundation for our submission to those blessed doctrines of grace, which make up so great a part of the gospel of *Christ*. It is this article which humbles and abases the pride of man, and brings him to disclaim all self-sufficiency, and to lie at the foot of God. It is this makes him poor in spirit, and renders him constantly a dependent and supplicant for divine grace. This leads him out of himself to *Christ* for righteousness, wisdom, and strength, as well as excites him to a more fervent gratitude for every blessing of soul and body. It is this doctrine that powerfully forbids those vicious passions of self-admiration, and scorn of our neighbour, and as strongly inclines us to christian compassion. It softens our hearts to pity and relieve each other in the various distresses of flesh or spirit, since we are all by nature under the same condemnation and misery.

Whensoever I see this doctrine of original sin rejected and renounced, there is sufficient reason from many observations, to expect the glories of the gospel will in the

the same proportion be depreciated, neglected and despised : If we are all born still in our original state of nature and innocency, the abounding grace and salvation of *Christ Jesus* does not seem so very necessary for us ; if it was but a little bruise we suffered by the fall of *Adam*, a little grace may heal us. Nor shall I wonder to see any man by degrees run intirely into deism, who scornfully abandons this truth. I confess I take this article to be of such eminent importance in our holy profession, as bespeaks our solicitous regards ; though a late author, with whom I have now to do, calls it “ one of the greatest absurdities in all the system of corrupt religion.”

I have endeavoured throughout this whole compofure to relieve and soften all the harsher, and more obnoxious parts of this doctrine of original sin, and several other articles of our religion dependent upon it ; and this I did attempt here and there by some new sentiments, which I was sensible must run the risk of severe trial, and bear the test of ancient prejudice. But this freedom of thought seemed to be necessary where former solutions failed, as I said before.

I have also ventured to preclude, or to cut off some of the harder and more offensive consequences that have often drawn or forced from these articles. It is evident that these points have been sometimes carried into extremes, and the explication of them has not always been well limited and guarded. To effect this work and to secure due honour to the moral perfections of God, under all the sinful and wretched scenes of human life, was one great end of my writing : My intentions were perfectly pacific and not contentious, and it is with great reluctance I am drawn into any debate.

It was my design also to leave these my sentiments to the world, without any further vindication or defence ; and yet I would not have it said or thought, that I utterly disregard all opinions and arguments different from my own. I am therefore almost constrained in this second edition to make some remarks upon the only attempt to answer this treatise which I have heard of, and that is the supplement to a book very unjustly called “ The scripture doctrine of original sin, proposed to free and candid examination.”

It is acknowledged, that in this supplement the same writer uses more candor and softer language, than he has done in the book itself, and deals for the most part in such a style as becomes a christian controversy : Yet I would humbly ask, whether he does not sometimes let a sharper arrow fly off ? But this may be easily imputed to a sudden effort of warmer zeal against the doctrine which he utterly denies. I would ask also, whether he does not sometimes advance a mere popular objection, and pursue it in such an overbearing manner, as might intimidate common readers, and affright them from these sacred truths, though they appear plain in several places of scripture, and are supported by the daily observations of men, both heathens and christians ? I would ask yet again, whether he does not now and then indulge a bold and sublime expression to break out, which might be taken for a flourish of glory rising from a contempt of all that is or can be offered in defence of our doctrines ? But the reader need not be afraid of such triumphant language, for I trust that whosoever will survey this whole debate without prejudice, will find that the author frequently triumphs without a victory, and though he has demolished many pages of mine in his own esteem, it is with mere shadows of argument.

It is true indeed, that the bulk of mankind are often carried quite away into flattering errors by positive assertions and strong assurances ; they dare not oppose a writer who with a sovereign scorn defies all opposition, and despises every thing that can be proposed against his darling opinions. Upon this view of things, I have said
within

within myself, " Surely I will begin to learn this manner of writing too, that I may gain more success for the great truths of the gospel in the minds of men." But, alas, I fear I am very much unqualified to aim at this talent: *David* might better wear *Saul's* armour than I could attempt this piece of heroism, or enter into this manner of dispute. Nor should I be perfectly satisfied with myself, to gain the assent of my readers, without more substantial and convincing evidence. The world indeed are ready to imagine, that where there is such confidence, and such triumph, there must be abundant proofs to support them; but they little consider how far this sonorous language will serve instead of reason and argument, and what numerous profelytes have been gained hereby to the several sects, parties or professions of human or divine science.

I must acknowledge, I once hoped that the very answers which I had given to various objections in the first edition of this treatise, would have resolved most of the difficulties which have been since objected: But many of these answers have been utterly disregarded, and those very objections again repeated. Now that such a solution of the difficulties may not be overlooked again, I have greatly enlarged the index, or table of contents, so that it reaches to almost every page, and points even an unwilling eye directly to those difficulties, and the solution of them.

Yet to make the subject of this treatise still more plain and easy and defensible, I have in this edition here and there interspersed a few needful observations and remarks on this subject, either in the book itself, or in the margin; which I hope may be sufficient hints to solve any old or new objections, which are or may be proposed, and to guard the reader more effectually from error and mistake in these important points.

It is true, I have mentioned no names, I have cited no pages, nor in all places have I used the very words of the objectors, because I would not turn this pacific treatise into a stage of controversy: Yet I hope I have given the full strength of the objection, as well as answered it with success. But the the index is so large, and particular, as will sufficiently direct an enquirer to every objection and answer.

Upon a review I have written much more than I designed, and am heartily sorry that I cannot so distinguish the additions made to this second edition, as to have printed them apart, for the service of those who are possessed of the first: But since they lie so much scattered through many pages, I humbly hope my friends will forgive this wrong, and permit a book which hath been assaulted, to receive a few explications and defences for the satisfaction of the world, though they may not find their own particular interest consulted therein.

I do not pretend to have touched upon every opposition which is made in this supplement, against the doctrine which I have maintained, though I am not conscious that I have omitted any one difficulty or objection of weight and moment, which I have met with in that book, and which has not been answered before. All lesser matters I am content to leave to the unbiassed judgment of persons of common understanding and piety. Souls impressed with a due veneration for scripture, and with a deep sense of their own sin and misery, guilt and weakness in the sight of God, will not easily be persuaded to twist and turn the expressions of the sacred writers from their most obvious and natural sense; nor will they hearken readily to those errors, which are contrary to their just experience, as well as to the dictates of the word of God.

But if any thing further be required for the confirmation and defence of the truth, I heartily recommend my reader to a late excellent "vindication of the scripture

doctrine of original sin." I confess indeed, it hath received the shew of a reply; but all the world sees how very few of the arguments there used, have been ever answered or regarded, so that most of them stand in their full force still: And I cheerfully leave this cause with that learned and ingenious friend of mine who wrote it.

I hope he will think it worth his while publicly to take further notice of this controversy: I am well assured he is able to support this doctrine with solid force of argument; and he can do it with candor too, where he is not irritated by "any unreasonable airs of infallibility and assurance, by sharp reproaches of sacred and important truth, and by feeble shadows and colours of argument, which have been often baffled and confounded." These are the things which, as he expressly informed me, gave him so just a resentment, and provoked his pen to some severities against the book which he opposed, and he professes also, this was done in imitation of the author of it. I wish with all my soul that no christian controversy might ever give occasion for such excuses on either side.

For my part, I pray for the blessing which this author supposes we have always enjoyed; I wish heartily that original sin may be demolished in us all, and have no more existence: But so long as this real and dreadful malady continues to rage through the world, and goes on to destroy mankind in multitudes, I hope in every age some wise and happy pens will arise to declare the painful truth, and convince the world of this article, which reason, scripture, and universal experience join to support. If all sense of our native sin and wretchedness be banished from among men, the rising ages may be tempted to neglect the only sovereign remedy of the grace of *Christ*, the second *Adam*, upon a mistaken presumption, that our natures have received no infection from the first.

T H E

T H E

R U I N a n d R E C O V E R Y

O F

M A N K I N D, &c.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

God made man upright.

MAN is a creature made up of two distinct ingredients, an animal body and a rational mind, so united as to act in a mutual correspondence according to certain laws and conditions appointed by his creator. Now suppose the great and blessed God, who is perfect in wisdom and power, in justice and goodness, were to form such a new creature as man is, and any of us should sit down and consider, according to the best exercise of our reason, what qualifications would be due to this new-made creature, as proceeding from a being of such wisdom, justice and goodness, we should probably trace out these several particulars.

I. We reasonably suppose he must have “ a perfection of natural powers, both of body and spirit,” considered as in a state of union, and suited to his present circumstances.

Not that we have any reason to suppose man should be made so perfect a being as God could make him; for the wisdom of God plainly designed to display it's unbounded varieties of contrivance in different ranks and orders of his creation: And besides, we cannot reasonably imagine this creature man should be made with such sublime perfections at first, as he himself might afterwards arrive at by a wise improvement of his powers: For God would not preclude either the diligence or the pleasure of his intelligent creature, from advancing itself to superior excellencies. But still that creature which was designed to bear his maker's nearest likeness and authority in this lower world, must have powers perfectly sufficient for his present well-being and acting in that station wherein God his creator placed him.

It has been indeed the vain fancy of some writers, that the eye of man in his first creation was so acute and penetrating, that it could discover those distant stars and planets of heaven, or those minute atoms in the contexture of earthly bodies round about us, which are now only to be seen by the help of optic glasses : And they have been so weak as to imagine that his ear could take in the most distant and feeblest sounds, and was equal in it's own original powers, to the advantages which we now receive from speaking and hearing trumpets : And that his feeling and his smelling had such proportionable superiorities in his state of innocence beyond all that we now experience. But it has been sufficiently made evident, that animal powers exalted to this degree would have been a burden, and a perpetual inconvenience to us in the present state ; they would have been calamities instead of comforts, and as an ingenious author says, a man endued with such exquisite senses

Would be " so tremblingly alive all o'er,
To smart and agonize at every pore :
Or, quick effluvia darting through his brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain.
Nature would thunder in his opening ears,
And stun him with the music of the spheres."

POPE.

But all the senses of this creature, though not so exquisitely fine, yet they must be clear and strong, his limbs vigorous and active, his body healthy in all the inward and outward parts of it, and every natural power in it's proper order.

Surely God would form such a creature in a state of perfect ease, without any original malady of nature to give him pain or sorrow. I cannot think there would be any natural tendency in his animal body to pains, diseases, or death, while he remained innocent and without sin or blame. And if there was any such thing as pain admitted into his first constitution, his pleasures must at least be equal to his pains, and his advantages also equal to his dangers : The very justice of God the creator seems to require this.

I add further, that if we consider the goodness of God, surely we must say the pleasure of his innocent creature should be superior to a state of mere ease or balance to his pains, and his advantages should be superior to his dangers : Divine goodness seems to require this, as antecedent in nature to any state of trial.

And as the powers of his body must be perfect in these respects, so the faculties of his soul must have their perfection too.

His mind or understanding must have all that knowledge both of God and creatures which was needful for his happiness. Not that we suppose God should give his creature man, when he first formed him, all manner of knowledge in arts and sciences, in philosophy and divinity ; but he must know at his first creation, what was necessary for his present peace and welfare ; his reason must be clear, and his judgment uncorrupted, his conscience upright and sensible, and his mind furnished with all necessary truths.

This leads me to speak also of his moral perfection. A rational creature thus made, must be not only innocent as a tree or a brute is, but must be formed holy ; that is, he must have a principle of holiness concreated with him : His will must have an inward bias and propensity to holiness and virtue ; he must have an inward inclination to please and honour that God who made him, a supreme love to his creator, and

and a zeal and desire to serve him, a holy fear of offending him, with a readiness to do all his will.

In short, either the new-created man loved God supremely, or not: If he did not, he was not innocent, since the law and light of nature requires such a supreme love to God. If he did love God supremely, then he stood disposed and ready for every act of adoration and obedience; and this is true holiness of heart. And, indeed, without this how could a God of holiness love the work of his own hands?

There must also in this creature be found a regular subjection of the inferior powers to the superior; sense and appetite and passion must be subject to reason, that is, the mind and conscience must have a power and readiness to govern these lower faculties, and keep them in due obedience, that he might not offend against the law of his creation, and his will must be inclined to it*.

He must also have his heart inlaid with love and good-will to the creatures, and especially those of his own species, if he should be placed among them; and he must be endued with a principle of honesty and truth in dealing with them. And if many of these creatures were made at once, there should be no domineering pride, no malice, no envy, no falsehood, no brawls or contentions among them; but all harmony and love, each seeking the welfare and happiness of his fellow-creatures as well as his own.

This principle of universal righteousness and holiness, I take to be the noblest part of that image of God, that is, his moral image, in which *Moses* the *Jewish* historian represents man to be at first created, and which I think was due to his nature from a God of equity and goodness. And the same writer assures us, when God surveyed all his works at the end of his creation he pronounced them all very good. And *Solomon* the wisest of men, in his book of *Ecclesiastes*, assures us, that "God made man upright." *Eccles.* vii. 29.

It is granted, that the natural image of God in which man was created, consisted partly in his spiritual, intelligent and immortal nature, and the various faculties thereof; and his political image, if I may so express it, consisted in his being made lord and governor over all the lower creation: But when we speak of this part of the divine image which is moral, we are assured by *Paul*, that it was the rectitude of his nature, or his conformity to the will and law of God. *Paul* was once a *Jewish* pharisee, and well understood the sense of *Moses*, and in his epistle to the *Ephesians*, iv. 24. he says, that the image of God, into which man is to be renewed, and consequently in which he was first made, consists "in righteousness and true holiness, as well as in knowledge," *Col.* iii. 10 †.

II. From the justice and goodness of God, we may also reasonably infer, that though man might be made with a perfect freedom of will, and with a power to chuse evil as

* Surely if the soul or will of this new-made creature had not a real propensity to love and obey God who is a spirit, but was merely formed with a natural capacity or power to do so, in a state of indifference to good or evil; then his being put into such a union with flesh and blood among a thousand animal temptations, would have been an over-balance on the side of sensuality and vice: But our reason can never suppose that God the wise, just and good, would have placed a new-made creature in such an original situation.

† Notwithstanding all the cavils which have been raised against these words, yet if these two texts are considered together, their most obvious meaning and the plain sense of them abides still confirmed, and will strike an honest and unbiassed reader. The new man, or the principle of true religion in the heart, is created by God after his moral image, wherein he created man at first, that is with a holy temper of mind and disposition, to the ready practice of all righteousness as fast as occasions and opportunities arise.

as well as good, that he might be put into a state of probation; yet it seems necessary that he should not only have a superior propensity to what was good wrought at first into his nature, but he must also have a "full sufficiency of power to preserve himself in this state of obedience and love to his creator," and to guard himself from every temptation and sin, if his faculties were rightly employed.

He must therefore have a sufficient knowledge of God and himself and his duty, so far as was necessary to practise it: He must have his maker's law written in his heart, that is, he must have such light of reason and conscience as, if carefully employed, would always lead him to judge aright concerning his duty; and he must have a ready and proximate ability to practise and fulfil it. Surely he must be furnished with powers of self-preservation in his state of innocency, and sufficient to guard him from offending his creator, and losing his happiness. This the justice and the goodness of God seem to require. His natural powers in themselves must have a full sufficiency for his own security from sin, if he used those natural powers in the best manner he was capable of; otherwise he would be exposed to unavoidable sin and misery, and certainly fall into it, if he were not able to preserve his innocence and virtue: He would as it were be made for his maker's anger, if he were not able to preserve himself in his love.

III. It is highly probable from the goodness of God, that such a creature would be made immortal, that is, he would have had no principles of decay or death in him. It is true, the great God, considered merely as an absolute Lord and sovereign of his creatures, might take away all that he had given him at pleasure; but it is hardly to be supposed, that if his creature stood obedient to all his maker's will, his wisdom and goodness would have destroyed an intelligent creature who had continued to serve and please him. Whatsoever had been done to his body, yet still we would suppose, God would not divest his soul of his natural immortality, but rather have advanced it to some better vehicle, or dwelling-place in some upper world.

It is likely also that God would "have endowed his soul with powers to arrive at higher degrees of excellency and happiness," than those in which he was at first formed: And hereby there was great encouragement given both to his watchfulness against every danger of sinning against God, and hurting himself, as well as to his zeal and diligence both in improving his natural powers, and in performing eminent services for his maker and converse with him. This would be the way for him to improve in the likeness, and in the love of that almighty being who made him, as well as more firmly to secure his own immortality and happiness.

IV. I think we may be able to add also, that the habitation, in which a God of infinite goodness would place such a holy and innocent creature, "should be a very beautiful and magnificent building, furnished with all manner of necessaries and conveniencies of life, and prepared not only for his safety and support, but also for his delight." Our reason seems to say this: And *Moses* writing concerning the first created pair of mankind, tells us, that when they were brought into this world, they were placed in *Eden*, or a garden of pleasure, and had a right given them to all the excellent fruits and delights of such a garden, and were made lords of all the creatures round about them, both in the vegetative and animal world.

And as the dwelling of such an innocent and holy creature should be delightful and convenient, so neither should there be any thing noxious or destructive found
in

in this habitation, but what this excellent creature man should have sufficient notice of, and should be endowed with sufficient power to oppose it, or to avoid it.

Or if we should suppose that this creature was placed in such a state of trial by his maker, as that he should be capable of receiving some unavoidable injuries from any noxious thing that was near him, it seems reasonable that he should have a proximate and immediate ability, by the right use of his understanding and his will, and his other powers, to relieve himself, and to turn every such injury to his own superior advantage, and to balance every pain by equal or superior pleasure.

V. And if this creature had power to propagate it's own kind, the child should be innocent and holy, and capable of maintaining it's duty and happiness as well as the parent.

Now if these are the qualifications with which such a new-made creature should be endued, and these the circumstances in which our reason would judge from the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God that he ought to be situated; then by a careful survey of what mankind now is, and a comparison thereof with what reason would tell us he ought to be, we may be able to arrive at some determination, whether mankind is at present such a creature as the great and blessed God made him at first: Which is the the subject of the ensuing enquiry.

Q U E S T I O N I.

Is man in his present circumstances such a creature as he came out of the hands of God his creator? Or, is he depraved and ruined by some universal degeneracy of his nature?

I HOPE we may derive some evident and complete answer to this enquiry from the following considerations.

Consideration I. This earth, which was designed for the habitation of man, carries with it some evident tokens of ruin and desolation, and does not seem to be ordained, in it's present form and circumstances, for the habitation of innocent beings; but is more apparently fitted for the dwelling-place of creatures who are degenerate and fallen from God

It is granted, that the beauty and order of this lower world, even in it's present constitution, and the wonderful texture, composition and harmony of the several parts of it, both in air, earth and sea, are most happily suited to the various purposes of that almighty being who made it: They give a constant and illustrious display of the power, wisdom and goodness of their creator. Yet it must be confessed also, there are some glaring and uncontroverted proofs of the terrors of his justice, and the executions of his vengeance both past and future.

Is not the form or shape of our earth, in the present divisions and boundaries of seas and shores, continents and islands, very rude and irregular, abrupt and horrid?

Does

Does it look like the regular and beautiful product of a God of wisdom and order? Survey a map of the world, and say, does the form of it strike our eyes with any natural beauty or harmony? Has it the appearance of a lovely and well-adjusted piece of workmanship? Or rather, does it not bear strongly on our sight the ideas of ruin and confusion? Travel over the countries of this globe, or visit some of the wilder parts of our own *british* islands, and make just remarks on them all. What various appearances of a ruined world? What vast broken mountains hang frightfully over the heads of travellers? What stupendous cliffs and promontories rise high and hideous to behold? What dreadful precipices, which make our nature giddy to look down, and are ready to betray our feet into downfalls and destructions? What immense extents of waste and barren ground in some countries? What hideous and unpassable deserts? What broad and faithless morasses, which are made at once both deaths and graves to travellers who venture upon them? What huge ruinous caverns of frightful aspect, deep and wide, big enough to bury whole cities?

Notwithstanding all these appearances of ruin and desolation on this earth, yet it is granted, that the great God may have made use of these ragged cliffs and promontories, these dismal caverns, deserts and morasses, &c. to serve various purposes of his providence for the good of mankind, while they dwell here, as well as sometimes for their punishment. His wisdom can bring good out of evil, and extract conveniencies and comforts out of the most hideous and desolate aspect of things. And thus his wisdom and goodness are glorified in the midst of these formidable scenes. And there remain still sufficient evidences of the perfections and glory of the creator in this earth, notwithstanding the many appearances of judgment and ruin which are found here, as in *Rom. i. 20.*

But let us proceed into this melancholy spectacle. What resistless deluges of water in a season of great rains come rolling down the hills, bear down all things in their course, and threaten spacious desolation? What roaring and tremendous water-falls in some parts of the globe? What burning mountains in whose caverns are lakes of glowing metal, or of liquid fire, ready to overflow and burst upon the lower lands; or their bowels are consumed within, and they are turned into a mere shell of earth, covering prodigious cavities of smoke, and furnaces of flame? And they seem to wait only for a divine command to break inward, and bury towns and provinces in fiery ruin.

What unknown and active treasures of air or wind, are pent up in the bowels of the earth by the rarefactions produced from subterraneous ferments and fires, all prepared to break out into wide and surprising mischief? What huge torrents of water rush and roar through the hollows of the globe we tread? What dreadful sounds and threatening appearances from the region of meteors in the air? What clouds charged with flame and thunder, which are ready to burst on the earth, and discompose and terrify all nature for many miles round and to make dreadful havock of mankind?

When I seriously take a survey of some such scenes as these, I am very ready to say within myself, "Surely this earth of our's, in these rude and broken appearances, this unsettled and dangerous state of it, was designed as a dwelling for some unhappy inhabitants, who did or would transgress the laws of their maker, and deeply merit desolation from his hand, and he has here stored up his magazines of divine artillery and death against the day of punishment."

But

But to take one step further, how often have the terrible occurrences of nature in the air, earth and sea, and the calamitous incidents in divine providence in several countries, how often have they given an actual confirmation to this sentiment ? What sweeping and destructive storms have we and our fathers seen by land and sea, even in this temperate island of *Great Britain* ? What particular floods of water and violent explosions of fire do we read of in the histories of the world ? What shocking convulsions of the globe stretching far and wide under the affrighted nations for three or four thousand miles, and spreading terror through every heart ? What sudden and huge disruptions of the caverns of the earth with tremendous bellowings, which have filled it's inhabitants with horror and astonishment, which have deformed it's blooming surface, and have made wide devastations ? What storms and thunders have spread abroad fatal mischiefs ? Do not these seem to be evident tokens of the actual displeasure of a God against the inhabitants of this globe ? Can we ever suppose that an infinitely good and gracious being would have originally so formed and governed the inanimate parts of this lower world, as to produce such deadly concussions and such desolating appearances, if he had not designed it to be the habitation of such creatures, as he foresaw would become rebels against their creator, and deserve these strokes of his indignation ?

The remarks which the late ingenious doctor *Woodward* has made in his "essay toward a natural history of the earth," may sufficiently convince any reasonable and attentive reader, that this globe of our's hath suffered such dreadful and desolating convulsions as we speak of, which must have been attended with horrible ruin, calamity and destruction to the men who were then inhabitants of it. He hath found the several strata or layers of the upper crust of the earth, whether marl, marble, clay, chalk, or sand, &c. to have been broken to pieces and dissolved, in *America* as well as *Europe*, *Asia* and *Africa*; and that huge trees and the bones of animals, together with infinite shells of sea-fishes and other productions of the sea, have been found inclosed in these strata, or beds of marl, clay, chalk, &c. and that at vast depths of earth, as well as at long distances from the sea : And whosoever shall peruse that author will see plainly, that the upper part of this globe has been ruined almost into a chaos, since it was made ; and he imputes it with great reason and justice to the general destruction of the world, and the wicked race of men who peopled it, by that flood, of which *Moses* the ancient *jewish* writer gives us so particular an account. And what further dreadful convulsions of nature, and what unknown desolations shall break out hereafter, to punish or to destroy the inhabitants of this globe, lies beyond the reach of our reason to foretell.

Known unto God are all our hearts and our works, and all his own ways from the beginning, and those ways of his are managed and conducted towards us, as becomes a wise and righteous governor ; sometimes for our trial and warning, and sometimes for our correction and punishment. Can we ever suppose that the blessed God, who loves all the innocent creatures that he has made, would place them in such a dangerous habitation, where many of them must necessarily be exposed to so many horrible accidents and mortal devastations, even while they continued in their own innocence and in his favour.

If we consult the writings of *Moses*, the *jewish* prophet, and *Peter*, the christian apostle, we shall find that they supposed the great creator to have laid up stores and magazines of ruin and destruction within the bowels of this earth, which he foresaw would be inhabited by a criminal race of beings : And he fore-ordained to break open his dreadful treasures of flood and fire at proper seasons, to drown and to burn the

the world together with the inhabitants thereof. When "all flesh had corrupted it's way before God, as *Moses* speaks, he appointed to destroy man whom he had created: He opened the windows or flood-gates of heaven, poured down rain incessantly upon the earth for forty days and forty nights; and the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and all in whose nostrils were the breath of life upon the dry land died," except eight persons, *Gen. vii. 11—24*. And the christian writer tells us, that "the world, which at that time was overflowed with water, perished; but that the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same divine word and providence are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Then the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the heavens shall be dissolved with a great noise, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up," *2 Pet. iii. 6, 7, 10*.

Now the great God, who appointed such prodigious quantities both of water and fire to be reserved in the bowels of the earth, and among the clouds of heaven, for such a foreseen day of general destruction, when the sins of the inhabitants should come to their full measure, did also doubtless prepare his materials, and appoint the days when all the lesser storms and hurricanes, earthquakes and floods, lightnings and thunders, and convulsions of nature, should break out and answer those particular seasons, when he intended to manifest his terrors to mankind, and to shew his wrath in their wretchedness and destruction: And he treasured up his magazines of wind, and flood, and fire in the air and earth for these purposes. Is this a habitation which God has made for the residence of pure and holy beings? Is this such a peaceful place as a kind creator would have formed and built for innocent creatures? Or does he manage these several scenes of our globe, as though those who dwell upon it maintained their primitive purity and his original favour? It is absurd to imagine such a conduct of a God so wise, so righteous and so merciful.

Consideration II. Let us take a survey of the herbs and plants and trees, and all the vegetable beings which grow out of this earth, together with the brute animals which are found on the surface of it, and we shall find more reasons to conclude that **MAN** the chief inhabitant is by no means such a creature, so innocent, and so much a favourite of heaven, as he must needs be when he came first out of his maker's hand.

It must be granted here again, that the wisdom and goodness of the creator have displayed themselves in a divine and astonishing manner in the animal and the vegetable world, beyond the utmost reach of our thoughts or our praises: But still we may have leave to enquire, whether among the numerous herbs and flowers, which are fitted for the support and delight of man, there would have been any noxious plants or fruits of mortal and malignant juice, appointed to grow out of the earth, without some plain signal mark or caution set upon them, if man had continued in his innocent state? Can we suppose that amongst the roots, the herbs, and the trees which are good for food, the great God would have suffered mischief, malady and deadly poison to spring up here and there, without any sufficient distinction that man might know how to avoid them? This is the case in our present world; and disease, anguish and death have entered into the bowels and veins of multitudes by an innocent and fatal mistake of these pernicious things for proper food.

It is granted indeed, that when *Moses* had dressed and furnished his garden in paradise, with all manner of vegetable fruits and pleasures for the new and holy creature **MAN**, he tells us of a tree in that garden which was called the "tree of knowledge,"

ledge," and it was certain death to taste it. *Gen. ii. 10, 16, 17.* But then man had express warning given him to avoid the danger: DEATH was, as it were, inscribed upon that tree in plain characters, and it was wilful iniquity for him to make so dangerous an experiment. Nor would there have been any poisonous or hurtful plant suffered to grow upon this earth, if the inhabitants of it had continued in their primitive holiness, without some natural mark set upon it, or some divine caution to avoid it. God loves the pure and innocent works of his hands better than to expose them to such unavoidable perils and miseries, and such mortal dangers and deaths, if they continue in their original innocence.

Again, let me enquire whether this earth in almost every soil would have produced such a quantity of briars, thorns, and thistles, and various weeds, which are so destructive to corn, the food of man, and create so much vexation to the painful tillers of the field, if man had been innocent, and the earth his habitation had never been accursed for any crime of the inhabitant? *Moses*, the famous *jewish* writer, mentions this very thing as a divine curse for the sin of man.

Let us arise to the animal or brutal world. There are many creatures indeed made for the service and pleasure of mankind, and they are easily governed to answer his purposes in human life. But are there not many sorts of animals also that weak man can neither govern nor resist, and by which all his race are exposed to miserable wounds and anguish, and death, whensoever they meet them?

Would there have been any such creatures in our world as bears and tygers, wolves and lions, animated with such fierceness and rage, and armed with such destructive and bloody teeth and talons, if man the supreme creature in it had not sinned and fallen out of his maker's kindest care? Or would these murderous animals ever have been let into a paradise made for the habitation of innocent beings; and that without power given to those innocents to govern and restrain them, or without sufficient art or speed to escape them? Would the children of men, innocent and holy, have ever been formed to be the living prey of these devourers? Were the life and limbs of such holy creatures made to become heaps of agonizing carnage? Or would their flesh and bones have been given up to be crushed and churned between the jaws of panthers and leopards, sharks and crocodiles, by land and sea? Are sensible, rational and innocent beings fit morsels for savages of the brutal kind, and were they first made for this purpose by a God of wisdom and goodness? Let brutes be contented to prey upon their fellow-brutes, but let man be their lord and ruler, and free from their assaults: And so he was, says the *jewish* lawgiver, in his first and innocent estate.

Give me leave to proceed in these enquiries. If man were not a fallen sinful creature fit for punishment, would there have been so many tribes of the serpent and viper kind armed with deadly venom to bite and kill man? Would such subtle and active mischiefs have been made and sent to dwell in a world which was all holy and happy? And would the race of all these murderous and destructive brutes of every kind have been propagated for six thousand years in any province of God's dominion, unless he had foreseen at first, that his intellectual creatures there would have rebelled against him, and deserved to be given up to their power and rage?

What are the immense flights of locusts which darken the sky, and lay the fields desolate? What are the winged armies of hornets and muscatoes, that make a pleasant land almost intolerable by the incessant and restless attacks they make on mankind with their painful stings? If they are found in the scorching climates of *Africa*, and in the sultry parts of the *East* and *West-Indies*, yet one would think such noisome

and venomous flies should not swarm upon the hills of *Russia*, and infest the polar regions, if the creator had not designed them for the vexation of the nations on all sides of the globe.

What are the innumerable hosts of caterpillars which in a night or two turn a garden into a desert, but so many messengers of the anger of God, against a sinful race of beings that dwell upon this earth? And since we are neither able to resist or subdue their power, nor avoid their plunder, we may certainly infer, that we are not such favourites of heaven as God at first had made us, while we are exposed to the endless attacks, insults and triumphs of such little despicable insects, and yet deadly and destructive enemies. The troublesome and pernicious tribes of animal nature both of larger and lesser size, which are fellow-commoners with us upon this great globe, together with our impotence to prevent or escape their mischiefs, is a sufficient proof that we are not sinless creatures, nor in the full favour and love of the God that made us, and that he has quartered his armies, his legions among us, as princes do in a rebellious province.

Perhaps, it will be replied here, that these mischiefs of the animal and vegetable world, these poisonous plants and vipers, and savage beasts of prey may be permitted to dwell in our earth, for the trial of it's inhabitants in a state of probation, even though they were innocent; especially since it is certain that their fatal effects do sometimes now fall upon good and pious men, during their situation here, which is a state of trial: But God can reward the sufferers in a future state, and thus absolve or vindicate his justice, wisdom and goodness in permitting them to be thus exposed in the present life. To this I answer two ways,

Answer I. There is a great difference to be made between innocent creatures in a state of probation, and sinful degenerate creatures in the same state. These mischievous and painful events, which now fall upon sinful mankind, would have been all righteous whether they had been in a state of trial or no; but most of them plainly declare the punishing hand of God, as well as the probation of creatures, and therefore it supposes them not to be innocent. Whereas, if these plagues had abounded in a world of innocence, many of the wise and holy inhabitants who had suffered these mischiefs, even if they were sent for their trial, would scarcely have found sufficient reason to rejoice in their situation, and to give thanks to their maker, as every innocent being would surely have occasion and reason to do. Serpents and bears, stings and poisons are terrible trials for pure innocents.

Answer II. The state of probation for innocent creatures, would not have included death in it, a violent and bloody, or a lingering and painful death, such as flows from some of these plagues and mischiefs upon the earth. The destruction of our nature, our dying and returning to dust, is supposed by the ancient *hebrew* historian to be a curse of God for the sin of man: And when once life is forfeited among the whole race of mankind, and they are all subject and devoted to death by some universal degeneracy, then a painful death may properly become a part of the further trial of such creatures who are to rise again: And any who are pious sufferers among them, and who behave well in dying, may be rewarded by a happy resurrection. This may be appointed with much more propriety, than that a painful death should be made a part of the trial of innocent creatures, who had never forfeited life, nor were ever legally subjected to death. In the case of dying infants, this appears with greater evidence, as I shall shew afterward.

Upon

Upon the whole therefore, such sort of noxious and destructive plants and animals do not seem to be made for a world of innocent, sensible and intellectual beings, to vex, and disturb, to poison and destroy them*.

Objection. But did not God renew to *Noah* the dominion over the brute creatures?

Answer. Not in such an ample manner as he first possessed it; but only the fear of man was to fall upon the brutes: Now this does not sufficiently preserve men from their outrage and mischief; whereas in the innocent state, no man would have been poisoned or torn by serpents or lions as now. See question VIII. section 6.

Consideration III. The manner of the introduction of the race of man into life and being in this world, is another proof that we are not the innocent favourites of heaven. Can we ever imagine the great and good God would have appointed intellectual animals to be propagated in such a way as should necessarily give such exquisite pain and anguish to the mothers who produce them, if we had been all accounted in his eyes a race of holy and sinless beings? And if the contagion or crime had not been universal, why should such acute pangs attend almost every female parent in bringing their off-spring into the light of life? Are not the multiplied sorrows with which the daughters of *Eve* continually bring forth their young, a pretty evident token that they are not in their original state of favour with that God who created them, and pronounced a blessing upon them in their propagation †.

The *Jewish* lawgiver in the beginning of his history tells us, that "God blessed the first man and woman that he made, and bid them be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it;" *Gen. i. 28.* and the same ancient writer within a page or two tells us, that these "multiplied sorrows" in the bearing and birth of children are pronounced as a curse from an offended God. chapter iii. 16. Surely the curse is not as old as the blessing: But sin and sorrow came in together, and spread a wide curse over the birth of man, which before stood only under a divine benediction: Nor is the blessing on human propagation quite taken away, though pains of child-bearing are added to it. Daily observation and experience prove that the blessing of propagation repeated to *Noah*, *Gen. ix. 6.* did not take away that curse. See question VIII. at the end.

Consideration IV. Let us consider in the next place how the generality of mankind are preserved in life. Some few there are indeed whom divine providence has raised to riches and plenty, and their food is daily provided for them without care or toil; but the millions of human creatures in all the nations of the earth are forced to support a wretched life by hard labour of the body, and intense and grievous fatigue of their joints and limbs, and all their natural powers. What dreadful risks both of life and limbs do multitudes run through in order to purchase their own necessary food,

* As there happened an intire revolution in the complexion and qualities of the minds of the first pair, of mankind, so to me, there appear to be evident indications of a designed change and alteration of the material world, and the nature of the animals and vegetables which subsist on this globe, from what they were when God pronounced "every thing good" that he had made. Doctor *Cheyne* in his essay of "health and long life."

† The author has been censured here for not dropping a tear over the fair sex under their sorrows and cute pains: But he imagines he has been dropping tears in every page, and that over every part of mankind, and on them in particular in several paragraphs of this book.

food, and to support their young helpless families at home? What waste of the hours of sweet repose at midnight, as well as long and slavish and painful toils of the day, do multitudes sustain, in order to procure daily nourishment? It is by the sweat of their brows they obtain their bread; it is by a continual exhausting their vital spirits, that many of them are forced to relieve their own hunger, and to keep off death, as well as to feed their young off-spring that otherwise would be born merely to perish.

If we survey the lower tribes of mankind, even in *Great Britain*, in a land of freedom and plenty, a climate temperate and fruitful, a country which abounds with corn and fruits, and is stored with beasts and fowl, and fish, in rich variety for food, what a hard shift do ten thousand families make to keep out famine and support life? Their whole time is devoured with the labours of the flesh, and their souls ever beset and almost eaten up with gnawing cares and anxieties, to answer this important question, "what shall I eat and what shall I drink" even in the poorest and the coarsest manner? But if we send our thoughts to the sultry regions of *Africa*, or the frost and snows of *Norway*, to the rocks and deserts of *Lapland* and northern *Tartary*, what a hideous and frightful thing is human life in those climates? How is the rational nature of man almost lost between their slavery, their brutality, and their incessant toils and hardships? They are treated like brutes by their lords, and they live like dogs and asses among labours, and wants, hunger and weariness, blows and burdens without end. Did God appoint this for innocents?

Perhaps, you will say, there is a pleasure in eating and drinking, which answers to the pain of procuring our food: But alas! Can this short pleasure of a few minutes, in trolling a few morsels down our throats, or washing the gullet with plenty of liquids, be supposed to give a full recompense for the incessant labours of life? Does it bear any proportion to the length of toil, pain and hazard, and the tiresome fatigues of our spirits and our limbs, wherewith the provisions of life are procured? *Moses* acquaints us indeed, that man even in his innocent and blessed state was placed in a noble and lovely garden, and was appointed to dress it: This was no curse, but a wise appointment of the God of nature by intermingled labour and exercise to preserve our health and vigour. But when the same writer comes to introduce the toil and fatigues we are forced to sustain, in order to secure us from starving, when he "speaks of eating our bread in the sweat of our brows," *Gen. iii. 17-19*. he acknowledges this to be another of the curses of God for the sin of man, and it is scattered all round the globe*.

Consideration V.

* It is strange that any man should say, in this sentence of God, *Gen. iii. 15-19*. "no curse is pronounced upon either *Adam's* body, soul or posterity; that the sorrow of child bearing is not inflicted as a curse; that the labours of life were increased, but not as a curse; and that this death was not a curse, &c." I would fain ask, what is a curse, if some natural evil pronounced and executed upon a person, or thing, be not so, especially when it is pronounced upon the account of sin, and comes from God himself as supreme governor and judge? And even the curse on the ground falls properly on the man who tills it.

It is granted, that all these may be sanctified by the covenant of grace to good people, and turned to their advantage. The wisdom of God can turn "curses into blessings," *Gen. i. 20. Deut. xxiii. 5*. Yet the original pronouncement and infliction of these evils was designed as a curse, or punishment for sin, as it is written, *Gal. iii. 10*. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things," &c. And I think it will appear evidently to every one who with common sense and without prejudice reads the history of the fall of man in *Gen. iii. 16-19*. And that death was designed as a curse on man for sin, is evident; for *Christ* suffered this curse for us, *Gal. iii. 13*.

It

Consideration V. Consider the character, temper and quality of mankind in general, even the multitudes and millions of mankind in all nations, with regard to religion and virtue, and then it will be hard to persuade ourselves that these are creatures, who enjoy the favour of their maker as his children, or bear the image of their common father in knowledge and goodness, as his original and native offspring ought to do.

I grant there are here and there some few persons who are restored to some degrees of conformity to him that made them; they are become his children by repentance and return to God, by a divine change passed upon their natures, and they enjoy a share of his special love: But the bulk of the world are of another stamp and character, and sufficiently shew there is some sinful and fatal contagion spread through the inhabitants of this province of God's dominion. *John* the apostle, in one of his letters, tells us, that there are few who "are born of God, as new creatures, but the whole world lies in wickedness." 1 *John* v. 19.

Would the blessed God make a world of intelligent creatures so ignorant and thoughtless of himself, and so insolent and rebellious against him as man now is? Can we think of that gross and stupid ignorance of the true God which reigns through vast tracts of land in *Asia*, *Africa*, and *America*, and the thick darkness as well as toil and slavery which buries all the heathen countries, and reduces them yet further almost to brutes and savages; can we think of the abominable idolatries, the lewd and the cruel rites of worship, which have been spread through some whole nations; the impious, the wicked and ridiculous superstitions which are practised among the greatest part of the world, and yet believe the blessed God would put such wretched and polluted workmanship out of pure hands?

Can we survey the bold and desperate impiety and profaneness, the swearing and cursing, and wild blasphemy that is practised and pronounced daily and nightly, among vast multitudes in those countries which know and profess the true God; can we behold that almost universal neglect of God, his fear, and his worship, and of the obedience due to him, which is found even among those inhabitants of this our world, who say they believe in God, and yet imagine that those wretches love their maker, that they wear his image, and are conformable to his will, as his original creature must and ought to be?

Nor are mankind only negligent of their duty to God, but they seem to have abandoned their duties to their fellow-creatures also. Can we think of the perpetual practices of fraud and villainy in the commerce of mankind, the innumerable instances of oppression and cruelty which run through the world; the pride and humour of the great, the wrath and ambition of most princes, their wild and mad extravagances of crime and folly, as well as their boundless insolence and tyranny over their subjects, and the endless iniquities and mischiefs that arise from envy, malice and revenge practised among lower people; and yet suppose that man was ever made with these vices in him, and these disorders around him, by that wisdom and goodness that created him? If we take a survey of the impure scenes of lust and intemperance

It is granted also, that God might in *Noah's* time take off, perhaps, some part of the curse from the ground, *Gen.* v. 29. and bless it with greater fruitfulness; he might renew his blessing on propagation, *Gen.* ix. 1. and many other blessings may be added: But still the curses of hard toil and sweating, of painful child-bearing, and of death, may be, and are actually continued through all generations, though some blessings may be mingled with them: And this is sufficient to answer all these objections. See more, question *VIII.* at the end.

rance and drunken madness which defy the day-light, and pollute the darkness; if we think of the monstrous barbarities which are continually committed by men in the christian inquisitions of *Spain, Portugal and Italy*, and among all the brutal and wicked tribes of heathenism, the *african savages*, and the *american cannibals*, who kill and roast their fellow-creatures, and eat up men as they eat bread; can we still imagine that mankind is a race of beings, who abide in their own native and original state, such as they came from the hands of their maker?

Shall it be said in opposition to this view of things, that it is not the greatest part of mankind that are so shamefully ignorant and so abominably vile? I answer,

Answer. That in matters of religion the greatest part of the world are gross idolaters; they adore the souls of the dead for gods, or they worship the sun and moon, or beasts, birds, images, names, fabled gods, stocks and stones, or any thing but the true God: They neither know their maker, nor love, nor worship him. There are many whole nations that practise abominable vices by general custom and consent, by the approbation of their wise men, and by long tradition, if not by the authority of their laws. This has been abundantly demonstrated by learned writers of the present age, both from the modern travels of the inquisitive, and from ancient histories, when they would shew in what need mankind stood of a divine revelation.

In matters of morality, though the bulk of mankind are not guilty of the very vilest crimes with regard to their fellow-creatures, yet if we consider the numerous corrupt inclinations and sinful passions that sway all the world, the lesser vices and irregularities that work and run through the hearts and lives even of the best and most civilized parts of the universe; if we observe the strange blindness of the understandings of men in divine things, the unfaithfulness of conscience, the unwillingness to know any mortifying and self-denying truths and duties, the general prevalence of appetite and sinful desires over the powers and the rules of reason, and that not only among the unthinking multitude, but even where reason is consulted and makes it's feeble remonstrances; if we consider the universal disorder among the faculties of mankind; and the violation of that harmony and order wherein consists innocence, virtue and peace: If we add to all this heap of confusion, their general thoughtlessness and disregard of God, and their gross defects in benevolence to their neighbours, it will appear plain enough, that there is not one upon earth that is truly righteous and without sin; and it is more abundantly evident, that mankind are far from a state of innocence and perfect virtue: They are fallen from God, and have lost that likeness to their maker, and that love of him, and those principles of universal virtue which doubtless were implanted in them by so wise, so righteous, so kind, and benevolent a creator.

That far the greatest number of men are evil, or greatly criminal, was a known sentiment of the ancients. The wiser and more considerate heathens saw and bewailed it, though they knew not how to account for it. *Οἱ πλείους κακοί*, "most men are wicked," was the sentence of a *greek* philosopher, and the common opinion of the most intelligent observers of mankind. The poets were generally loose enough themselves, but they were wise enough to observe the universal wickedness of mankind and agree entirely in this obvious and general truth. *Virgil* tells us, that few are virtuous enough to escape the punishments of the other world: He brings in a ghost telling his son,

" Pauci læta arva tenemus. "

And

And in this life the character of human nature among the poets is this :

“Nitimur in vetitum semper, cupimusque negata.”
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas,
Audax omnia perpeti.

HOR.

And that vice is early and universal he says,

“Nam vitiis nemo sine nascitur.”

And when this author speaks of young men in general, he gives them this character;

“Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper.”

Seneca says just the same,

“Pejora juvenes faciliè præcepta audiunt.”

And *Juvenal* abounds in this account of human nature ;

“Rari quippe boni : Numero vix sunt totidem quot
Thebarum portæ, vel divitis ostia Nili.
Quæ tam festa dies ut cesset prodere furem ?

— Ad mores natura recurrit
Damnatos, fixa & mutari nefcia.—
Quisnam hominum est quem tu contentum videris uno
Flagitio ? — Dociles imitandis
Turpibus & pravis omnes sumus.”

JUV.

They own indeed there was once a golden age, or a state of innocence at first. Their reason told them, that the great God must and did make man upright and good ; but they imagined that mankind did degenerate by degrees in successive ages, and at last grew universally wicked. This is asserted not only by satyrical writers, but by those of a gentler disposition and a softer pen. *Ovid* and *Manilius* were no satyrists, yet they speak the very same language :

“Protinus erupit venæ peioris in ævum
Omne nefas : Fugere pudor, verumque fidesque.
In quorum subiere locum fraudesque dolique
Insidiæque, & vis, & amor sceleratus habendi :
Victa jacet pietas, terras Astræa reliquit.”

OVID.

“Perque tot ætates hominum, tot tempora & annos,
Tot bella, & varios etiam sub pace labores,
Cum fortuna fidem quærat, vix invenit usquam.

At quanta est scelerum moles per sæcula cuncta ?
 In populo scelus est : Et abundant cuncta furore,
 Et fas atque nefas mistum, legesque per ipsas
 Sævit nequities."

MANIL.

The sense of all which is thus represented in *english*.

" There are very few who die that go to heaven, or a state of happiness. We are always desiring and pursuing forbidden things. Mankind is bold to rush into forbidden wickedness ; nor is any man born without vices : Young men most readily hearken to evil counsels ; they are soft as wax to be moulded into vice, but rough and rugged to their best monitors. Good men are very few, scarce as many as the gates of the city *Thebes*, or the mouths of the *Nile*. What day is there that does not shew us some new malefactors ? Nature recurs to it's own wicked manners, is fixed in it, and knows not how to change. How few persons will you find contented with one sort of wickedness ? We are all very forward to learn and imitate whatever is base or wicked. After the golden age, and some few following seasons, all manner of iniquity broke out: Modesty, truth, and faithfulness are quite fled away, in whose place came deceit, mischief, violence and wicked covetousness. Piety lay subdued, and justice left the earth. And through so many ages of men, so many murderous wars, and labours, and toils, in time of peace, there is scarce such a thing as honesty to be found ; but through all ages there is an abundant load of crimes : Wickedness runs through the people : Madness rages, fills and over-whelms all things. Right and wrong all are mingled, and iniquity reigns even through the very laws of men."

This was the common complaint of the most observing heathens in their age, as it is our's in the present day.

Consideration VI. Not only those who are grown up to mature age, but even mankind in it's younger years, before it is capable of proper moral actions, discovers the principles of iniquity and the seeds of sin. What young ferments of spite and envy, what native wrath and rage sometimes are found in the little hearts of infants, and sufficiently discovered by their little hands, and their eyes, and their watchful countenances, even before they have learned to speak, or to know good and evil ? What additional crimes of lying and deceit, what obstinacy and perverseness proceed to blemish their younger years * ?

How

* Here our discourse is at once confronted by bringing in the words of our Saviour, *Matt. xviii. 3.* " Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Little children say they, are here made the patterns of humility, meekness, and innocence; and in several other places of scripture, a state of childhood is represented as innocent, meek and humble ; and therefore they have no such native vices. I answer this objection by granting,

Answer. That children appear to be of a much meeker and milder temper than grown persons, because they have much fewer temptations to vices of various kinds than grown persons meet with : Their inward vices are seldom awakened and provoked so much as they are in advancing years.

Let it be further observed, that this humility of children which is recommended in this text, is their freedom from that ambition which possessed the disciples, when they sought " who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

I grant

How little knowledge or thought of God, their creator and governor, is found among children even when they begin to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong? What an utter disregard of him that made them, and of the duties they owe to him? How hard is it to teach them to know their maker, and to obey him? And no wonder it is so in children, since men and women are just the same.

Yet, farther, how little prevailing sense or practice of what is morally right and good is seen among them, when they begin act agreeably to their own childish and youthful age? How contrary is their conduct to the laws of reason, which are the laws of their maker? How do the evil passions of nature, and irregular appetites and vices of the will prevail in them, and over them betimes? Even from their first capacity of acting as moral creatures in the world; how are they led away to practise falsehood and injury to their play-fellows, and that sometimes with insolence, cruelty and revenge? How often are they engaged in bold instances of disobedience to parents or teachers, and in acts of shameful intemperance? They do evil with greediness both to themselves and to their fellow-creatures: Nor do I think there is one youth in the world who has not, on particular occasions, manifested some early inclinations to one vice or another. Would this have been the case, if mankind had been just such creatures as they came from their maker's hand?

Nor can these vicious propensities be imputed to any ill influences of custom, or education, or example; for many of these things appear in children before they can take any notice of any such examples set before them, or are capable of such imitation. And it might be added, that even in the best of families, where good examples stand round them, where children from their youngest years are instructed in their duty, and encouraged and excited to practise virtue and religion, and persuaded to it by all the motives of authority and love, and led by many examples as well as by precepts, yet their hearts naturally run astray from God. The greatest part of them in their childhood visibly follow the corrupt influences of sense, appetite and passion, and in very early years they manifest the inward evil principles of pride, obstinacy and disobedience: And multitudes, even in such families, grow up to practise many vices, and to publish the iniquity and shame of their nature, in opposition to all the influences of instruction and advice, example and authority. And if all children were utterly untaught and unrestrained, even in the years of childhood, these iniquities would break out and discover themselves with much more evidence and shame: This appears in particular families, even in such countries and such towns which are civilized by learning and politeness. There are a thousand instances wherein this is evident in fact; that where the education of children is neglected, the whole generation becomes vicious: So among the heathens, there are whole nations wicked, perhaps without an exception.

D d 2

Consideration VII.

I grant also, that young children in general are really meek and innocent, in comparison with persons grown up, who have increased in pride and malice; and this is enough for such representations in scripture.

But after all, I ask, are not these sad descriptions which I have given of the vicious tempers of many children, just and true? Does not daily observation discover them? And if so, whence does this evil temper arise, which at any time discovers itself in any of these little creatures? What is the root that brings forth such early bitter fruit? I say, whence can it proceed, or what is it, but some innate evil disposition that they bring into the world with them? This will appear more evidently in the following pages, wherein other pretended causes are excluded and refuted.

Consideration VII. To give yet a fuller confirmation of this truth, that mankind have a sinful and corrupt nature in them, let it be observed, that where persons have not only been educated from their youngest years in all the practices of piety, virtue and goodness, as far as parents could influence them, but where young persons themselves have taken something of a religious turn betimes, and have sought after true wisdom and piety, what wretched and perpetual hindrances do they find within themselves? What inward oppositions are working in the heart, and too often interrupt this holy course of life? What vanity of mind, what sinful appetites, what sensuality and forgetfulness of God, what evil affections, what vicious thoughts and wishes, and tendencies of heart rise up in contradiction to their honest and professed purposes of virtue and holiness, and lead them astray too often from their duty both to God and man?

Even some of the best of men, who have observed their own hearts, are forced to cry out, "Oh, wretched creature that I am!" What vicious principles do I find in my members warring against reason and the law of my mind, and bringing me too often into captivity to sin? Whether St. Paul complained thus concerning himself or no in his letter to the *Romans*, chapter vii. verses 23, 24. or whether he spoke it in the name of mere pretenders to religion, yet "as there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and never sins;" so I am persuaded, there is not a man who cannot in some measure take up this complaint, that he is sometimes led astray by sense, appetite or passion, in greater or lesser instances, against the better dictates of his mind and conscience: There is not a man who may not mourn over himself in this language, "O, wretched creature indeed! Who shall deliver me" from this native disorder, this inward plague, these evil propensities of my nature? "There is none perfectly righteous; no not one."

I may sum up the argument contained in the three last considerations in this manner, viz.

If great multitudes of mankind are grossly sinful, and if every individual, without exception, is actually a sinner against the law of his creator; if sinful propensities and inclinations appear even in youngest years, and every child becomes an actual sinner almost so soon as it is capable of moral or immoral actions; we have just reason to conclude, there is some original and universal degeneracy spread over the whole race of men from their birth: For it is not to be supposed that the wisdom, equity and goodness of God would ever have produced such a world, wherein every single creature coming out of their maker's hands in their original state of innocence and full power to obey, should be thus defiled by their own wilful and chosen disobedience.

It has been said indeed, in opposition to this argument, that if the first man, even *Adam*, did fall into sin, though he was made innocent and perfect, then among a million of creatures, every one might sin, though he was made as innocent and as perfect as *Adam*; and that this is a better account of so universal an apostasy. To which I answer,

Answer. There is indeed a bare possibility of this event: But the improbability that every creature should fall into sin, is in the proportion of a million to one. And I prove it thus,

If a million of creatures were made but in an equal probability to stand or fall; and if all the numbers from one to one million inclusively, were set in a rank, it is plain that it is a million to one that just any single proposed and determined number

ber of all this multitude should fall by sin: Now the total sum is one of these numbers, that is, the last of them, and consequently, in this way of calculation, it is a million to one against the supposition, that the whole number of men should fall.

And yet further, if they were all made in a far greater probability of standing than falling, which the justice and goodness of God seem to require, then it is much more than a million to one, that all should sin against their creator without exception. See therefore the weakness of this objection; though I have read several triumphs, in a few pages, supported only by this argument, which has the proportion of more than a whole million to one against it. And yet this argument will grow still ten thousand times stronger, if we suppose ten thousand millions to have lived since the creation.

It has been said again, if the nature of our first parents was not originally corrupt, who committed the first sin, and occasioned the suffering, neither is my nature originally corrupt, who am no ways concerned in the commission of that sin, but only am thereby subjected to suffering. I answer,

Answer. But if the sin of our first parent laid him under guilt, tainted and defiled his own nature, both soul and body, and I am derived from him as my spring and head, I may be thus defiled also, receiving a taint both in soul and body, from the first criminal, as I have shewn afterwards.

Consideration VIII. It may be further argued, that man is a creature fallen from his original state, because he is so far enfeebled or corrupted, that he has not a ready and practical power* to perform the law of his maker, which yet continues to be written in his heart by nature. Does not this law of reason, and nature, and conscience, require us to love God with all our heart and soul, to deal with our neighbour as we think it proper he should deal with us, and to govern our own appetites and passions by rules of reason? Does it not require also, that these things must be done in perfection, and without defect, whether they regard God, our neighbour, or ourselves? Doth it not demand that we should adore and honour, fear and trust in the great God that made us, and obey all that we know to be his will, in a perfect manner? Does it not prescribe constant justice, truth and goodness toward our neighbour, without one evil thought, one covetous wish, one envious, or malicious act of the will,

* Observe, I do not assert here, that man has not a remote, speculative and natural power to obey the law of God: but it is abundantly evident he has not an immediate, proximate and moral or practical power to do it, since not one of all mankind have ever done it. And let it be observed, that it is the want of this moral disposition, this practical power of perfect obedience to the law of God, which I call insufficiency, ability and impotence, as is shewn at large under question XIII. and scripture uses the same language.

And here I desire it may be observed also, that this distinction of sufficient power into natural and moral will solve the objections derived from a pretence, that "God would never continue mankind under such a law which they have not present sufficient power to obey." This is certain matter of fact, that there is a law written in the heart or conscience of man, *Rom. ii. 15.* which requires greater perfection of obedience than man has a practical or moral power to fulfil, though he may have natural powers equal to the command.

I add yet further, that though many men, by the usual aids of divine grace may obey this law of God, so far as is necessary, according to the new covenant, and may obtain the favour of God, yet they cannot fulfil it, so far as to obtain justification or acceptance according to this law, which requires perfect obedience, and curses every one that fails in it. *Rom. ii. 9.* and chapter iii. 19, 20. *Gal. iii. 10.* And this hope of divine aid, and divine acceptance is richly sufficient to encourage our utmost diligence in all the duties of obedience, and secure men from despair, and from the neglect of religion and virtue. Thus it appears, that this impotence of men to fulfil the law perfectly, is no discouragement from the utmost diligence in religion.

will, or the tongue, or the hand, towards him? Does it not demand that our self-government, or our temperance should not indulge one irregular passion, or appetite? And does it not require, that every one of these lower powers should be perfectly subject to reason and conscience? Now is there any man on earth can say, that he has a ready and practical power to perform all these laws which his maker has written in his heart, without any sinful irregularity in thought, word or deed?

Perhaps, you will insist on it still, that man has still within him those faculties of understanding, and will, and affection, which have a natural power to perform these duties; and perhaps you will prove it too, because whensoever, according to any scheme of religion, a man is made holy, he has no new faculties given him, and therefore these natural faculties which he has are sufficient. I answer,

Answer. If any man be made holy, though he has no new faculties given him, yet their vicious propensities are so far subdued or taken away, and the sinful tendencies of all his powers are so far changed into that which is virtuous and holy: But it is evident in our present state in this world, that the propensities of the will and affections to that which is evil, are so much superior and prevalent, that I believe there is no man lives one day without breaking this perfect law of his maker, in thought, word, or deed: And therefore, though by reason of his natural faculties he may have a remote and speculative sufficiency of natural power to obey his maker's law, yet he has no proximate and practical, or moral sufficiency to perform it, by reason of the perverse and sinful bias of his will and affections, and the weak influences of understanding, reason and conscience, which are so easily and continually overcome by sinful appetites and inclinations.

It should be considered further, that the outward temptations to which mankind are exposed all around them in the present state, especially in the vigour and perfection of animal life, are evidently too strong to be effectually and constantly resisted and overcome by these enfeebled faculties of reason and conscience, while, at the same time, his will and affections, as well as his appetites and passions, have a powerful bias and propensity to yield to the temptation, and commit sin.

So that if we take a full survey of all these circumstances in which mankind are now situated, if we consider their strong propensities to evil within their own nature, the powerful temptations to evil that surround them without, and the feeble efforts of their guardian powers, reason and conscience, to resist all these oppositions, and to break through all these impediments; and if we add here to the constant and daily evidence of all this, by the constant and daily sins of mankind, we must be forced to acknowledge, that his moral and practical powers in the present state, are by no means proportionate to the law of God, and to his duties, but vastly inferior to them.

Now, would a wise, a just and a merciful God, who is abundant in goodness, have formed such sensible and intellectual creatures originally by his own hand, in such a wretched estate, that their powers and capacities should be so much below their duties, that they break his law daily and continually, and it may be said, that whatsoever natural faculties they have, yet they have not a ready and practical sufficiency of power to perform it?

Shall it be objected further, that God cannot require more of man than he has given him power to perform, and therefore his law cannot require perfection, if he has not power perfectly to obey it; for the demands of a law must be limited by the powers of the subject, and cannot exceed it. To this I might answer,

Answer I.

Answer I. That the demands of a law must not exceed the powers of an innocent and new-made creature, just as he comes from the hand of God; but when he has some way or other ruined and enfeebled, perverted or broken his original powers, or brought an evil bias into them, may not the law of God still continue to demand such obedience, which he has not a present sufficiency of power to yield or perform? Or I might perhaps better answer thus,

Answer II. That the law of our maker in it's demands must be limited by the original, absolute and natural power of the creature to perform it, which was then also morally and practically sufficient for the purpose; but when a race of beings, by their own folly, have so perverted and discomposed these natural faculties, that they have not an immediate, proximate and practical power to perform the law of God, this does not destroy nor abate the commands of the law of our maker: But they stand in full perfection of authority and demand, since the natural powers are still continued, though our perverse inclinations, which is indeed our moral impotence, are continually carrying us to disobey these commands.

Shall it be said again, though we break the laws of our maker so frequently, yet he knows the weakness of our frame, and he pities and pardons infirm and feeble creatures, where there is any desire to please him, though their disobedience be very frequent. But in answer to this, I would say,

Answer I. First, It is the new covenant, or covenant of grace, which holds forth God as pitying and pardoning his sinful creatures; not the law of creation or innocence, by which all men are condemned for sin.

Answer II. Secondly, I would enquire, did God make such creatures so infirm and feeble in their original state, as that they should so frequently and continually offend their maker, and want forgiveness? Did he give them such a law to govern their actions, as should never, never be fulfilled by any one of them, but should be daily and constantly broken by them; and that the new-made creature should want daily and continual pardon? Would a God, who adjusts the proportions of all things in infinite wisdom, give a law to his creatures which is so disproportionate to their original powers, that even in the state of their creation they are almost under some sort of necessity of breaking it, and stand in need of daily and repeated forgiveness? Does not all this view of things give us abundant conviction that mankind is now a degenerate being, and not such as it was first created by that wise, that righteous, and that merciful God who made it?

If those who are most unwilling to acknowledge this universal and early depravation of man, would look into themselves daily, and observe all the sinful and irregular turns of their own heart, how ready and propense they are to sin and folly in greater or lesser instances, how soon appetite and passion start up in opposition to reason and conscience, how often they prevail over their better sentiments, how frequently the perfect demands of the law of God are broken by them, how thoughtless and forgetful they are of their divine maker and governor, how cold and languishing their affections to what is religious and holy, how little love they have to truth, how little delight in virtue by nature, how averse to commune with God, while they are fond and violent in pursuit of trifles and follies; could any of them think that they are such innocent and holy creatures as God at first had created us, and that they have been such from their childhood or their entrance into the life and state of man? Surely a little more frequent and accurate observation of their own heart would lead them into a better acquaintance with themselves, and convince them feelingly that there was some early degeneracy from the first rectitude of human nature.

Consideration IX.

Consideration IX. Another proof of the degeneracy and fall of mankind is this; that they have not only lost their innocence and the image of their maker, and their original sufficiency of power to fulfil the demands of his law, but they also lie evidently under his actual displeasure, which could not be their primæval state. As we have taken a short view of the sins of men, let us also briefly survey the miseries of mankind, and see whether they look like a race of beings such as their creator made them, or are partakers of his original favour.

Think of the thousands of rational creatures descending hourly to death and the grave. Among these a few are destroyed by some sudden stroke; but far the greater part go thither by painful and slow approaches? Death and the grave, a sore punishment! A dark and shameful prison! Which would never have been made for a race of intellectual creatures, persisting in the beauty and honour of their innocence and virtue, and abiding in the original favour of him that gave them life and being. "Death is the wages of sin;" *Rom. vi. 23.* and from this punishment of sin there is none of the race of men can plead a freedom, or claim a discharge.

If mankind had stood in their original sinless state, can we ever suppose that any of them should have been made sacrifices to death? Much less that every one of them should be bound to certain destruction? And especially that half their race should have been doomed to die before seven years old, that is, before they reach a tenth part of the present age of man, or have done any thing in life worth living for? Did God make rational creatures to destroy them by millions? Were men at first made for death? Methinks every hillock of mortality in a church-yard, and every grave-stone there, assures us that mankind have lost their innocence.

But let us proceed to other miseries that attend us in life-time, many of which end in death and dissolution, and all hasten us down to the grave.

Think next of the multitudes that are racked day and night on their couches, with extreme torture, by the gout and stone, the cholic and rheumatism, and all manner of acute and painful diseases; and then say, are these the torments which a merciful God could ever contrive for a sinless creature? Think of the dismal and destructive scenes of warfare and bloodshed, that have one time or another overspread all nations. Does not nature furnish this world with woes enough, or does not mankind die fast enough, but they must wound and slaughter each other? Cast your thoughts over a field of battle, where thousands of such noble creatures as man are destroyed like brutes, are slain by mutual hatred, and perish by sharp and bloody strokes, and the fatal engines of death; and many thousands more lie on the cold ground, with their flesh and limbs battered and torn, wounded and panting in extreme anguish, and die by degrees: Are these such scenes of innocence and peace as mankind were made for? Are these the signals of their maker's love, or of their own original virtue?

Yet again, let us send our thoughts through the long ranks and files of war. What unknown multitudes are bred up to this bloody trade, and sell their lives daily for the price of a few pence, or for a morsel of meat and sustenance. Multitudes are driven by their princes against their will into the wars, or dragged on by their leaders to destruction and death. What millions are constrained to stand the volley of small shot in the field of battle, or to venture up to the mouths of cannon in the siege of a town or city? They are forced to hazard their limbs and their lives, and even their eternal interests, by fighting against they know not who, and destroying men they know not why. They are put under a necessity of killing their fellow-creatures,

or

or being killed by them, because wild and vicious princes quarrel about the bounds of their dominion, or about some trifles of state and impertinencies of honour. Some of them who have any remains of conscience, are forced to fight against their own best interests of liberty and property, as well as against the interest of God and goodness. Whole nations are thus appointed to slaughter by the tyrannical laws of those that rule over them in various parts of the world; and sometimes there are but very few in a whole country that are excused from bearing arms and entering into these dismal and deathful circumstances, when their emperors shall tell them that their humour or pleasure requires it. Would this have been the fate of mankind if they had stood in perfect innocence, or if all nations were now born in their original purity?

Think of the vast numbers that are swallowed up in the mighty waters by the rage of stormy winds and seas, which are roused to destroy mortals, and pronounce aloud the wrath of heaven. Review a little what immense multitudes have been swept away by the pestilence, or have had their nature and life worn out by the long and tedious agonies of famine? Would famine and pestilence, with all the dismal train of lingering horrors which attend them, have been ever made for innocent creatures, to have thus swept away whole nations of them, of every age and sex, men, women, and children, without distinction?

Think yet again, what numbers of mankind have been crushed into misery and death, in their own dwellings, and buried there by earthquakes, or have had all their bones bruised, their limbs disjointed and broken, and their flesh painfully battered by the fall of houses, and been buried alive in the ruins of whole towns and villages, while their neighbours have been burned or drowned in multitudes, by the dismal eruptions of fire and water, or destroyed terribly by deluges of liquid fire, breaking out of the earth? Survey these scenes of horror, and then say, would a God of goodness and justice treat innocent creatures at this rate, or expose them to these formidable mischiefs?

Carry your thoughts over the seas to the country of cannibals and other savages, where by the custom of nations, thousands of their conquered enemies, or prisoners of war, are sometimes cruelly put to death, to pave the road to their own palace with their skulls, or they are offered in sacrifice to their idols; sometimes they are roasted in slow fires, as I before hinted, and tortured and eaten by their barbarous conquerors: Add this to all the former miseries, and then say, whether this world does not look like a province half-forsaken of its gracious governor, or almost given up to mischief and misery.

Some perhaps will say here, it is easy to account for a multitude of these miseries, without any universal degeneracy or corruption of human nature. It is but a small part of mankind who are overwhelmed by earthquakes, who are drowned in the seas, who are destroyed by war or famine, who are racked with long and terrible distempers, who are eaten by savages, or put to death by the hands of violence and cruelty; and perhaps these who suffer peculiar afflictions are punished for their own personal iniquities.

Answer. Take a just survey of all the persons who have fallen under these miseries, and there is not the least reason to conclude they have all been sinners above others. Do not the calamities of war, and famine, and pestilence, and earthquakes, and inundations, &c. spread promiscuously without distinction through a whole country at once, and involve the best and worst of men in the same misery and ruin? And is there any ground to imagine, that those spreading devastations make any distinction

inction between greater and lesser sinners? No, by no means. It is sufficiently evident that all persons are liable to them, and whole nations at once suffer by them. Such is the universal degeneracy of human nature, that wheresoever these calamities come, they find none innocent; and it is the general situation of degenerate mankind, under just displeasure of the God that made them, which exposes them all to these destructions.

But to proceed in a survey of the miseries of mankind. Think of the innumerable common misfortunes which attend human life; look into the bills of mortality, observe what multitudes perish by these accidents in one city every week, and infer what a much larger number of these accidents injure the health, the ease, the limbs of mankind, and fill their lives with pain, though they are not brought immediately to the grave. Think of the mischiefs which are continually plotting and contriving in all the towns and villages of the world, whereby perhaps one half of the race of men try to defraud, circumvent, and do injury and mischief to their neighbours; and the bad and the good suffer promiscuously in this world in their possessions and properties, in their comforts of life, in their peace, in their health, and in all that is dear to them. Take a view of these extensive and reigning vices and miseries, and then say, whether this world be not a part of the creation of God, which bears plain and signal tokens of the frowns and displeasure of its maker.

It would add much to the heap of human misery, if we should consider the cutting sorrows which arise from the daily loss of our dearest comforts. What groans and heart-aches and wailings of the living surround the pillows of dying friends and dearer children? What symptoms of piercing and painful distress attend their remains when they are conveyed to the grave? And by such losses all the comforts of future life become disrelishing, and every new scene of sorrow is imbittered with double gall.

Let it be observed, that in the sorrows, miseries and deaths of mankind round the world, especially in the more civilized part of it, there is scarce one person sick, or in pain, miserable or dying, but several others sustain a considerable share of misery by the strong ties of nature, or of interest, the dear bonds of friendship, and the tender and sympathizing powers which are mingled in our composition. This diffuses a personal calamity through whole families, this multiplies human sorrows and miseries into an endless number, and makes us justly enquire, can all this be contrived to torment innocence and holiness, or to punish creatures who continue such as God made them at first?

It would still swell the load, if we bring in the many teasing vexations and cutting disappointments which arise from the falsehood of pretended friends, and from the cruelty of kindred, from whom we expected nothing but benevolence and love, together with the everlasting inquietudes that are rising in some families hourly from little crossing occurrences of life. Can this be a state of happiness, where we meet with perpetual contradiction to our opinions and to our wills, which awaken the soul too often into rage and impatience, and ruffle the spirits of most men?

Add to all this the inward anguish that springs from all our own uneasy and unruly passions of every kind: And where is the breast that has not some of these uneasy passions born with it, and reigning in it, or at least frequently making their assaults upon our peace? Bring in here all the wrath and resentment kindled in the hearts of men, all the envy and malice that burns within, all the imaginary fears and the real terrors of future distress coming upon us, all the rage and despair of lost blessings that were put within our hopes, and all the vicious and ungovernable ferments of
animal

animal nature, which torment the spirit all the day, and forbid our nightly repose. Would these things ever have happened if man had continued in favour with his maker, and had not been almost abandoned to his own folly, and in a great measure given up to misery?

Suppose it should be objected here against all this reasoning, in some such manner as this: It is granted that men may make sorrows for themselves, and may be punished by their follies, if they chuse to create their own miseries: But let us compare together all the real necessary sorrows which any man suffers, and the comforts which he enjoys, and when we have put them into the balance, let us remember, that so far as these comforts reach, they will answer for an equal share of sorrows and calamities, and absolve the justice of God from treating his innocent creatures amiss. Then all the over-balancing sorrows may be esteemed but necessary even for an innocent race of beings to sustain, in a state of trial, in order to future rewards or punishments: And the great God well knows how to reward all that over-balance of sufferings hereafter, which every man sustains here beyond the proportion of his comforts. In answer to this,

Answer. I would survey the sinful and wretched inhabitants of this world round the globe, and then humbly inquire, doth one quarter of mankind behave so well in this world in their state of trial, as to give any observing person reason to expect, that they shall ever partake of rewards hereafter? Is there found among mankind such a dutiful and obedient conduct towards God, or such a life of strict virtue and goodness towards their neighbour, as to entitle one fourth part of men to the rewards of futurity, and consequently to any equal recompence hereafter, for the former over-balance of their sorrows here? And if not, how then shall this same over-balance of calamities and miseries be accounted for? It is confessed that it was inflicted on them as innocent creatures in a state of trial, and therefore justice requires that they should have a recompence for these over-balancing sorrows, which yet they are never likely to receive.

Upon the whole therefore we cannot well impute the superior sorrows of mankind merely to such a state of probation; but they are rather to be accounted for as the effects of some universal degeneracy, and the just displeasure of the righteous creator and governor of this world.

But to make this appear yet plainer, I proceed to the next consideration.

Consideration X. Not only those who are grown up in the practice of iniquity, who may be supposed to be punished for their own sins and follies, but even all mankind in their earliest infancy are under some tokens of the displeasure of their maker, before they become actual and personal transgressors, before they know any thing of moral good or evil, or can come into a state of trial.

In the very youngest hours of life, before children can be said to perform rational actions, or to commit actual sins, they are subject to a thousand miseries; which shews them to be a race of beings out of favour with their maker, and under his displeasure even from their birth: For can we think a God of perfect goodness, wisdom and equity, would bring such infant-beings into existence, to feel such calamities in the complete innocence of speechless nature?

What anguish and pain are infants sometimes exposed to, even as they are coming into the world, and as soon as they are entered into it? What agonies await their birth? What numerous and acute maladies, what deplorable diseases are ready to attack them? What gripes, what convulsions of nature, what cutting anguish, what pangs and inward torments, which bring some of them down to death, as soon as they have seen the light of this world a few hours or days? And if they survive the first three or four months of danger, what unknown torture do they find in the breeding of their teeth, and other maladies of infancy, which can be told only by shrieks and tears, and that for whole days and nights together, while they are lingering on the very borders of death? What additional pains and sorrows do they sustain sometimes by the negligence or poverty of their mothers, and by the cruelty of nurses? What sore bruises and unhappy injuries, whereby many of them are brought down to the grave, either on a sudden, or by slow and painful degrees?

Do we not shudder with a sort of sympathy and compassion, when we read of children falling into the fire, and lying there in helpless screams till their limbs are burned off, or their lives expire in the flames? Or when they drop into scalding vessels of some boiling liquid, whereby they resign their souls in extreme anguish? Are not all our tenderest powers shocked and pained when we hear of infants left on their couches, or in their cradles, by poor parents for a hour or two, while dogs or hogs have gnawed off their flesh from their bones, and they have been found in dying agonies and blood? And what shall we say of whole nations in older times, or the *bottentots* in our age, who expose their children in the woods when they cannot or will not maintain them, to be torn and devoured by any savage beast that passes by? Are these little young creatures counted perfectly innocent and guiltless in the eyes of that God, who by his providence leaves them to be exposed to so dismal a fate?

Add to all this the common calamities in which these infants are involved, when fires, or earthquakes, or pestilences rage through a whole town or city, and multitudes of them being helpless perish with extreme pain. And there are a thousand other accidents that attend these little creatures, whereby their members or their natural powers receive dismal injuries, and perhaps they drag on life with blindness, deafness, lameness or distortion of body or limbs; sometimes they languish on to manhood, and sometimes old age, under miseries and sore calamities, which began almost as soon as their being, and which are only ended by death.

Now as these sorrows and death cannot be sent upon them, in a way of correction for their personal and actual sins, for they have none, so neither are they sent for the trial of their virtue, or as any part of a moral state of probation; for they have no reason in exercise, no knowledge of good and evil, and are incapable of virtue, as well as vice, or any moral probation in their early infancy and state of ignorance; yet we see multitudes of these little miserable beings; and are they treated as the innocent harmless creatures of a God of love and compassion? Amidst all these surrounding scenes of danger and distress, do they look like young favourites of heaven? Or rather, do they not seem to be a little sort of criminals under some general curse and punishment?

If mankind had stood in their original innocence, surely their infant off-spring would have entered into the world under some general word of blessing. The God
who

who made the first parents of mankind must certainly have blessed them, in several other respects, as well as in saying, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth:" *Gen. 1. 28.* And their infants would have been born like little young angels, ever easy and smiling in a perfection of innocence, and in circumstances of pleasure: And they would have grown up by many little efforts of goodness to the fuller knowledge and love of their maker, and the practice of every virtue, surrounded with the comforts and satisfactions of an infant state, and guarded from every mischief by a kind and watchful providence.

But alas, the case of children is quite the reverse of this purity and peace. Survey the dangers and miseries just mentioned, and say, are these provided to receive young angels just entering into being? Were these maladies and griefs and groans prepared to seize a race of little angels coming into our world? If seraphs and cherubs had been made to propagate in our manner, would the great and good God have provided such scenes of pain and peril, disease and death, to have met their young blooming off-spring at the very gates of life, and to have attended them all their way, or would he have sent them so soon, and in such vast multitudes, to death and darkness? Would God have ever appointed a race of infant angels to have entered into being in the midst of such infelicities, and have sent more than half of them to destruction again, before they arrived at the exercise of their intellectual powers, or had seen or done, or enjoyed any thing worth living for? Yet this is the wretched case of the off-spring of mankind in every generation.

It has been objected here, that these sufferings of children may be for the correction and punishment of the sins of their parents. But the answer is evident, viz.

Answer. Can a God of equity and justice inflict such sufferings on children without any such constitution whereby the sins of parents may be, as it were, translated, or imputed to the children, as I have shewn in the following parts of this book?

Besides, many of the parents of these suffering children may be dead, or absent, so as never to know it: How can it then be a correction or punishment for their parents sin, any other ways, than as it is a general punishment for the sin of their first parent?

I know some have pretended to account for all these calamities of the infant-race of mankind, by saying roundly, that God rewards them sufficiently in another world for a few years pain here, when he takes them to heaven. But I answer,

Answer. Are all children which die secured of heaven, either by reason or scripture? If the infant seed of *Abraham* and his pious followers, are taken to dwell with God, as their God, are the children of wicked parents as happy too? Are you sure they are not subject to any pains hereafter? Or that their souls are not annihilated at death? And upon either of these suppositions there is no recompence for the pains they suffer.

Besides, a multitude of these grow up to mature years, and if they should prove wicked at last, and be sent to hell, what recompence have they for their infant-sufferings? Or will you say, that God actually punished them before they had sinned, and while they were innocent, because he knew before-hand they would sin? Is this God's way of dealing with his creatures? Doth reason, or doth scripture give us any hint of this kind? And yet further, how can any creature know what they are punished for? And what wise or good design can this their punishment

nishment obtain, when no creature can know what they are punished for in their infancy, if it be not for some universal degeneracy of all the race?

But because I would answer all the objections I can think of which have the appearance of reason, I would proceed in this work.

Against all these representations of human infelicity and misery, in older or younger years, perhaps, some persons may make this remonstrance: Is not the great God infinite in goodness? Do not his tender mercies spread over all his works? Does not that *Moses*, the *jewish* lawgiver, who has been cited and called to attest the miseries of man, does he not represent God as merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness? *Exod.* xxxiv. 6. How is this consistent with such miseries reigning among his creatures? I answer,

Answer. If we consider mankind as a sinful degenerate part of God's creation, it is most abundant goodness that they have any comforts left, and that their miseries are not doubled: Now *Moses* and the *jewish* writers do consider mankind as fallen from God, and so his goodness is evident in a thousand instances; though it must be confessed there are also thousands of instances of his just hatred of sin, and his righteous punishments scattered all round this world among all nations and all ages of men.

Some have been so weak as to reckon up a large catalogue of the instances of divine bounty and goodness in this lower world, and add thereto the revelation and proposal of his saving grace; and they would make this as evident a proof that mankind stands in the favour of God, as all the other instances of the miseries of human life can be any proof of an universal degeneracy of men, and the anger of God against them. But it is very easy to reply,

Reply. That the goodness of God may incline him to bestow a thousand bounties and graces upon criminals and their whole race; but I think his justice and goodness will not suffer him to inflict miseries in such an universal manner, where there has been no sin to deserve them, either in parents or children, in head or members, in themselves or their representative, as will appear in what follows hereafter; but I would not anticipate my design, and bring in this before it's time.

Consideration XI. If we collect and put together all these scenes of iniquity, folly, and wretchedness, even among the better sort of men, as well as the worst, and that even in younger years, as well as in more advanced age, and take a survey of them in their total sum, it is sufficiently evident that creatures lying in such sinful and miserable circumstances, disobedient to God and under his displeasure, are not such as they came out of the hands of their creator, who is wise and righteous, holy and good. His wisdom, which is all harmony and order, would never suffer him to frame such a vast multitude, such a whole species of beings under such wild and innumerable disorders both natural and moral: His holiness would never permit him to create beings with such innate and powerful principles of iniquity; nor would his infinite goodness allow him to produce a whole rank and order of creatures in such circumstances of pain, agony, torment and death, if they were to be esteemed his pure, innocent and holy workmanship, just come out of his sacred hands.

Can we ever reasonably suppose, that the holy and blessed God would originally design and frame a whole world of intelligent and rational creatures in such circumstances, as that every one of them coming into being, according to the laws of nature,

sure, in long successive ages, in different climates, of different tempers and constitutions, under different influences, having greater or lesser advantages for wisdom, virtue, and happiness; and in ten thousand thousand different stations and conditions of life: I say, can we suppose that they should all break the laws of their reason, and defile themselves with sin in greater or less degrees, should all feel their appetites and passions so often contrary to reason, and yet prevailing over it, that they should all so far offend against their maker, all become guilty in his sight, and be all exposed more or less to his displeasure, to pain and misery, and mortality, without one single instance or exception that we know of to the contrary? If mankind were such creatures as God at first made them, can we suppose that not one man among so many millions, should make so right and proper an use of his reason and conscience as to avoid sin and death? Can we think, that this should be the universal consequent of their original state and constitution, as they are framed by the hand of a wise, and holy, and merciful God? This, I say, is such an absurd thing, as no reasonable man can suppose. Surely God made man upright and happy, and all these mischiefs could never come directly from our creator's hand. Perhaps, here it may be objected again,

Objection. That this universal condemnation of mankind, as it were, by wholesale, and laying them all under such a charge of guilt and wretchedness without exception, is more than our experience or observation will allow. It is acknowledged that many are now guilty, and many are miserable, though they were born innocent, and not degenerate: but still a far greater part of men have more moral good than evil in them, and have more pleasure than they have pain; and therefore upon the whole, mankind must not be pronounced "a sinful and a miserable being:" And if God has appointed such a constitution as is best in the whole view of things, and is favourable to the majority of the human race, or the bulk of the world; this is sufficient to vindicate the justice of God; and then the few sufferers have no reason to complain. Do we not find it thus under the best of human laws and constitutions, that some persons who were once innocent will grow wicked? And that even some innocent persons may be laid under unavoidable hardships or sufferings? Yet all law-givers account those to be just constitutions, which provide for the welfare of the bulk of the subjects, though here and there will be an unhappy instance of guilt and misery.

To this objection I would offer these three answers.

Answer I. In order to pronounce a man miserable, it is granted he must have more pain than pleasure; but in order to pronounce a man a sinner, there is no necessity that his moral evil should exceed his good, or his vices transcend his virtues. If a man had a hundred virtues, one vice in the sight of God would pronounce him a criminal; one evil action would break the law of his maker, and lay him under his maker's just displeasure. He that keeps almost all the law of God, and offends in one point, affronts that authority which requires all obedience: So that all the race of man are certainly under this condemnation, that they are sinners every one of them; and, consequently, exposed to the anger of him that made them. And thus with regard to their sinfulness my argument stands in full force.

As

As for misery, let it be allowed for the present, though it is by no means granted, that there are many persons whose pleasures exceed their uneasinesses; yet it is certain that there are great numbers also of mankind, whose pains or uneasinesses, wisely and justly compared with their pleasures, will appear far to exceed them; and it is hard to say, how this should come to pass, if mankind were all innocent and happy by nature, as they are now born into the world. Their universal sinfulness therefore, and the misery of multitudes, must conclude them all under some spreading degeneracy.

Answer II. What though the makers of human laws are not able to frame such constitutions in every case, which shall certainly secure happiness to all the innocent? This is because their narrow views of things, and their short foresight of future events, will not enable them in making laws to provide against all future inconveniencies, nor to secure the innocent always from injury: But we must not think nor speak thus of the divine law-giver, the creator and the governor of all things: He grasps at once all possibles, as well as all futures, in his present view, and therefore he can guard against any injury that might befall innocent beings; nor will divine justice, in my opinion, suffer any mischief to light upon any individual innocent without equal recompence, for "the judge of all the earth will do right." *Gen. xviii. 25.*

Answer III. Though the bulk of mankind in the present constitution of things could be proved to be happy, by their pleasures exceeding their pains, yet this gives no manner of satisfaction to any one individual, who suffers misery under the same constitution without any demerit. Every intelligent and innocent individual has the same right to his maker's regard in point of justice, as if there were no other creature but he: And the advantage or happiness of the majority is no reason at all, why any one innocent individual should suffer any injury or injustice by the constitution which God has made.

And therefore if God had constituted any thing in his creation or providence, which would bring the least injury, or unjust pain or loss on any individual, sensible, or intelligent being entirely innocent, I think his justice would oblige him to interpose, and to prevent that injury, or to compensate it with some superior good. If any one therefore, whether man or child, among the race of mortals, and especially if a considerable number of them, have more pain than pleasure, they must be supposed to be involved in some guilt, or some fatal degeneracy, which may give just occasion to their misery.

Consideration XII. To give a little further force to this argument, after the survey of all these pains, sorrows, and miseries, let us consider what poor, low, sorry pleasures the bulk of mankind are in pursuit of, to relieve them under this train of wretchedness, and then ask, whether these are suited to a race of intelligent and innocent creatures? Let us stoop down a moment and cast a glance at the sports of children, from five to fifteen years of age; what have all these little toys and fooleries in them, that would be fit for young angels dressed in flesh and blood? Would so many years of early life have been wasted in such mean and trifling diversions by a race of holy and rational beings? And how much early iniquity and mischief in thought, word, and action, is mingled with these sportings among the younger tribes of mankind, God only knows.

As

As for the many years of life, what are the greatest parts of the delights of men, but either foolish and irrational satisfactions, or down-right sinful? What are the pleasures of the rich and the great, to relieve them under the common sorrows of life? If it be not profuse luxury and intemperance, which is often the case, yet is it not grandeur and magnificence, furniture and equipage, finery of dress and gay appearances, whereby they take a pride to shew themselves superior to the rest of their species? And when they shine in silks of various dye, and blaze amidst the splendor of gold and jewels; this is the vain satisfaction of most of them, to look down upon their fellow-creatures with airs of vanity and contempt, and build up a swelling idea of themselves, as though their outward clothing and appearance added real excellency to their character. Would innocent and rational creatures have made this a matter of their boast and pleasure, "my coat is gayer than your's, and I have more shining things round about me than you have?"

Others, again, in the midst of the common calamities of life, divert themselves with gaming and with childish sports. Whether cards and dice be the utensils of their childish play, to divert their troubles and pass away time, or whether these implements be the engines of covetousness, to deprive their neighbour of what he possesses; yet under both these aspects they are but a sorry relief for a race of holy and innocent beings, should they fall under some unhappy accidents. How trifling are these sports where mere delight and diversion are sought? But if the design be lucre, how is the game mingled with covetous hopes and wishes, with uneasy fears, with the working of wretched inward passions, which sometimes break out into wrath and fury, and vexations under losses and disappointments?

Again, what multitudes are there that drench themselves in gross sensualities as their chief delight? They make a god of their belly, they indulge their appetite in every nicer dish, till they have over-loaded nature, and make haste to disease and death. They drink and swill till they have lost their reason, and lay themselves lower than the brutes that perish. They drown their cares in wine or in coarser liquors, or they bury them in all manner of sensual impurities. Are these the delights that would have been chosen and sought by mankind, had they continued a race of holy and innocent beings, as their God at first made them?

Others there are that release themselves from the toils and sorrows of life, by gadding abroad and mixing with trifling and impertinent company. Some delight in low and wanton jests, and their satisfaction lies in foolish merriment, in mean and trifling conversation, a little above the chattering of monkeys in a wood, or the chirping of crickets upon a hearth, but not always so innocent.

And there is another set of the sons and daughters of *Adam*, who are never so well satisfied as when they are railing at their neighbours, and tossing scandal abroad; they take every one's character to pieces, and set it in a hateful light. From principles of mingled pride and envy they are hurried on with pleasure to murder the reputation of their fellows: They cast abroad firebrands and arrows tipped with slander and poison; and say, am I not in sport? They delight to tear their neighbour's good name without mercy. This is their mirth and recreation, this their satisfaction and joy; these are their reliefs against the common miseries of human nature, and their chosen methods to pass away the tiresome hours of life.

But would a race of innocent beings, if they ever happened to meet with any accident of pain or sorrow, fly to such sort of mean and foolish, or criminal, refuges as these are? Would they pursue such gluttonous and drunken pleasures, such vain or vile delights? Would they become rivals for happiness with the four-footed

beasts of the earth, and aim at no higher felicities? Or would they sport themselves as devils do, in accusing their fellow-creatures? Surely, if we take a due survey of the very pleasures of the bulk of mankind, as well as of their sorrows, we may learn from thence, that we are by no means such creatures as our primitive creation made us, but there is some great and universal degeneracy spread over all the generations of men.

Consideration XIII. If I were to add one more proof of the general ruin and degenerate state of human nature, I would observe, how we are all posting to death and the grave, and every one of us are succeeding our neighbours, in our proper turns into some unknown state, some invisible and future world, and we profess to believe this too; and yet how exceeding few are there amongst mankind who are solicitous about this great and awful futurity? Though we are exposed to so many miseries, sins and follies in the present life, and are hastening visibly and hourly to the end of it, yet how few are there that make any careful preparation for a better state than this, or that seek to acquire a temper fit for the superior pleasures of a world of spirits, even though they believe this better world? What multitudes are running down daily and directly to death and darkness, and speeding to an endless duration in some unknown country, without any earnest enquiries and solitudes of soul about their manner of existence there, and their final fate and doom when this life is at an end? They walk over the busy stage of life, their souls are filled with the concerns of mortality, they toil and labour, or they play and trifle a while here, so far as the burdens and calamities of life will permit them, and then they plunge with reluctance into an unseen and strange world, where they will meet with a just and holy God, whose wisdom will assign them a place and portion suited to their own character: But we have reason to fear by their sinful behaviour among men, that that portion and that place, to which the bulk of mankind are hastening, is far distant from the favour of the God that made them, and from other holy and happy creatures whom he has framed for the inhabitants of those regions. Thus far our fears of their future misery are but too justly awakened.

Now is it possible, if we were a race of pure and innocent beings made for immortality, in some other world, that God should suffer the bulk of mankind to remain so ignorant and thoughtless of that future state into which we are all hastening? Would a good and gracious God leave a race of such creatures as he made them, in such a stupid insensibility of their eternal interests, so unsuited to the felicities of an immortal spirit, and so negligent of all preparations for them?

Should some blessed angel of heaven, who had never known any thing of our earth, come down amongst us, or some inhabitant of an innocent globe, some stranger to our world, descend from one of God's holy dominions on high, and spend a month or two in a survey of all the iniquities and miseries of the tribes of mankind, can we imagine he would pronounce us holy or happy? Could he ever believe the holy and wise, the righteous and the gracious God ever put such workmanship as we are out of his hands for new-made creatures? Would he not immediately conclude, there are so many signs of guilt and wretchedness among us, as constrain him to confess some universal degeneracy and desolation fallen upon us, which is utterly unknown to the holy and happy provinces of the empire of the blessed God?

Upon

Upon this whole survey, I think our own reason must needs join in the same mournful confession, that some universal apostasy from the laws of our creation, some criminal disorder and wretchedness has some way or other come upon the whole race of mankind, since they first came out of the hands of their maker: There must be some spreading poison which has tainted our nature, which renders us so prone to sin, and so lamentably guilty, so miserable in the present state, so thoughtless of the future, and so unprepared for it. There must be some general revolt of the race of man from their creator, whereby they have disturbed, disordered, and broken their original natures and powers, whereby they have ruined their innocence and their peace, and raised a most unhappy empire of tyrannical and vexing passions upon the ruin of them; whereby they have provoked the anger of their kind, wise and holy maker, and their righteous governor, and whereby they become exposed to such wretched circumstances even in their infancy and childhood, as well as when they grow to years of greater understanding: I think it is evident that a righteous and wise governor, even though we should not consider his infinite goodness, would not suffer creatures to come into such deplorable circumstances, if they were not regarded by him in some sort as criminals: He would not inflict so much natural evil, that is, pain and misery, and spread it through such a vast province of his dominion, so universally without exception, nor suffer it to be inflicted in the course of his providence, if it were not with a regard to some general moral evil, that is, sin.

Will some persons again complain, that in representing the sorrows and miseries of mankind, I have here acted the part of a satyrist rather than of a philosopher, and have summed together all the pains, mischiefs and distresses of human life without giving a due place to the pleasures and delights of it, or bringing them into the account?

I confess that the great God hath furnished this world, which is the habitation of man, with multitudes of grateful and pleasing objects, to regale his senses, to feast his appetites, and to excite his most agreeable passions, which might have been part of his happiness in a state of innocence. But now the unreasonable strength and violent efforts of these appetites, the sinful bent and bias of his will, together with the weak resistance against vicious excesses which is made by his reason and conscience, turn every one of these pleasures into real dangers and snares. There are but few who indulge these delights without dishonouring their nature, defiling their souls with sin, and breaking the laws of God; and in the midst of so degenerate a state, their most tempting satisfactions and delights do in a great measure lose the nature of good or benefit, because of their constant danger of plunging men into guilt and misery.

Shall I be told again, that there are multitudes of men, whose easy and peaceful circumstances are much superior to their troubles and sorrows, and these would upon the whole be pronounced happy, even if there were no future state?

Though I have answered this already, by shewing that the happiness of the major part does not vindicate that constitution which leaves any individuals under misery without some original demerit, yet I will answer here more directly,

Answer. That if the greatest part of men could see things in their true light, as God and angels regard them, surely the bulk of the world would be found on the miserable side, whatever particular exceptions might be found among individuals: And this in general would teach us that the inhabitants of this world are

not a race of happy beings, such as they would have been, if they had been innocent, or such as they were when they came first out of the hands of their maker?

But the inference of our wretchedness or ruin, may be pronounced with much more strength and universality concerning this world, if we join the sins and the miseries of mankind together. If we unite in one view all the criminal as well as the painful circumstances which I have represented in these foregoing propositions, I think it must be granted, that there is some universal ruin and degeneracy spread all over human nature, and every individual helps to complete this mournful sentence, and confirm the truth of it, that "man is a sinful and unhappy being."

And methinks, when I take my justest survey of this lower world, with all the inhabitants of it, I can look upon it no otherwise than as a huge and magnificent structure in ruins, and turned into a prison and a lazaret-house or hospital, wherein lie millions of criminals and rebels against their creator, under condemnation to misery and death; who are at the same time sick of a mortal distemper, and disordered in their minds, even to distraction: Hence proceed those infinite follies and vices which are continually practised here, and the righteous anger of an offended God is visible in ten thousand instances. Yet there are proclamations of divine grace, health, and life sounding amongst them, either with a louder voice or in gentler whispers, though very few of them take any notice thereof. But out of this great prison, this infirmary, there is, here and there, one who is called powerfully by divine grace, and attends to the offers of reconciliation, and complies with the proposals of peace: His sins are pardoned, he is healed of his worst distemper; and though his body is appointed to go down to the dust for a season, yet his soul is taken upwards to a region of blessedness, while the bulk of these miserable and guilty inhabitants perish in their own wilful madness, and by the just executions of divine anger. Before I finish this general head I would ask leave to make one remark, and that is,

Remark. What an unreasonable thing is it to deny this doctrine of the universal depravity and corruption of mankind, and renounce it in every degree, when it appears so evident to our eyes, and to our ears, and to our daily and constant observation and experience in so many thousand instances? Is it not almost like winking against the light, since the promises are so strong and glaring, and the inference so powerfully demands our assent?

I must profess, that with all the diligence and impartiality with which I am capable of reviewing what I have written on this universal degeneracy of mankind, I am not conscious that I have made a false representation of this matter, or aggravated it beyond truth. The innumerable miseries, follies and madness of mankind, which in various forms strike our eyes, our ears, and our thoughts from day to day, confirm my sentiments of the doctrine of some original and universal fall of man from the purity and glory of his creation.

And what is the chief temptation that leads some men to deny this doctrine? Is it not because they cannot give a satisfactory account how to solve some of the difficulties that attend it? Many of the heathen philosophers believed it from their own experience, and their daily survey of mankind, though they were utterly at a loss how to account for it: And what if we could never assign any sufficient and satisfactory reason and cause for it, or shew how this spreading degeneracy begun, or how it came to take place so universally amongst men? What if we are perplexed

plexed and still at a loss to satisfy our own enquiries, how all this guilt and mischief came upon us; must we therefore deny what we see, and hear, and feel daily?

Can we account for all the secret things in the creation of God, in the world of meteors and minerals, the vegetables of the field, or the brutes of the earth, or the animal body of man? Does any man refuse to believe that the infinite variety of plants and flowers in all their beauteous colours and forms grow up out of the same dark and dirty soil, because he doth not know all the secret springs of their vegetation? Do men doubt of the truth of a loadstone's drawing iron to itself, and making a needle point to the north, because they cannot find out the way of it's operation? Are we not sure that our food nourishes our bodies, and medicines relieve our pains, though we are utterly at a loss to tell all the ferments and motions of those atoms by which our nourishment is performed, or our diseases healed? Can we account for all the darkneses, and appearing difficulties and confusions among the events of providence? Can we discover all the reasons of the wise conduct of God among his creatures? No surely, we cannot pretend to it: And yet since these matters of fact, and these events are obvious to all our senses, do we not deny and refuse to believe these things which are evident in creation and providence, and which are communicated to us by so many springs and mediums of knowledge, merely because we cannot account for the original and secret causes or reasons of them? Or because we cannot reconcile some crossing appearances, and jarring apprehensions that attend them? Why then should this universal degeneracy and ruin of human nature be denied, though we cannot remove every objection that attends it?

And yet if we will search faithfully into the causes and springs of this matter, so far as our natural reason, assisted by the light of revelation, will enable us, we may hope to find some solution of those hard questions, which may give a degree of satisfaction to humble and modest minds, though perhaps not sufficient to silence every curious and unreasonable cavil.

Q U E S T I O N II.

How came this general degeneracy, vice, and misery, to overspread mankind in all nations and in all ages?

TO find a complete and satisfactory answer to this enquiry is not a very easy thing. It was a vexing question among the ancient schools of the heathen philosophers, "whence evil came first among mankind?" And though they had many guesses and loose conjectures, yet none of them could give an account of this matter, to satisfy the minds of studious men. And if we should not hit upon such a solution of this difficulty now, as may on every side make all things lie quite strait and easy, yet if we can but propose a way to solve it, which may maintain the honour of God, and justify his conduct in a good degree, we may expect the reader should be candid in his censures, where the matter of fact is so evident, and yet the manner of accounting for it is so difficult.

scult that it has employed the wisdom of great and learned men in all ages with so doubtful a success.

To find an answer to this question, we shall not immediately run into revelation and scripture; though doubtless, we have the most certain and satisfactory account of it given us there; yet since what the scripture says of this matter is so short, and is to be derived chiefly from the third chapter of the book of *Genesis*, and the fifth chapter to the *Romans*, and from some few other general hints that are scattered up and down in the bible, let us try whether we cannot by a train of reasonings, with a little help from scripture, find out some clew that will lead us into the spring and original of this sinful and miserable state; and afterward we will inquire whether or no this very clew of reasoning, this track of guilt and misery, be not the same which scripture more directly points out to us, and strongly confirms by all it's sacred and divine discoveries on this subject.

In order to trace out this matter by reasoning, let us begin according to the following propositions.

Proposition I. This general degeneracy of mankind, so far as I can judge, can come upon them but by one of these three ways; either, 1. That the souls of all men existed in a former state, and sinned against their maker there, and are sent to dwell in bodies in this world, attended with such unhappy circumstances of sin and misery, either as a natural consequent of, or as a punishment for their former sins in some other world. Or, 2. That one original parent of them all sinned against his maker, and sustained the miseries consequent upon it in his own person first, and when he became a father, he spread a sinful and miserable nature through all his race and off-spring by mere propagation. Or, 3. Some original person stood before God, as a common federal head and representative of mankind, upon condition of bringing happiness or misery on all the race according as he behaved, well or ill; and through his disobedience, sin and misery came upon all whose head he was, or whom he represented. If the two first will not solve the difficulty, we shall be constrained to take in the last. Let us see how far each will go.

Proposition II. This present wretched state of things, could not arise from the particular personal sin of all single souls in a former state before they came into this world: This present universal misery and wretchedness, could never be appointed as a punishment to us for our former personal offences against our maker, for we know nothing of any such former state or former offences; we have not the least idea or remembrance of it: Now personal guilt cannot be properly punished by the all-knowing and just God, where the sinner has no consciousness nor remembrance of the crime. There must be the same mind, the same spirit, the same intelligent self or person, conscious both of the past personal sin, and of the present punishment, to make it appear to be a proper instance of the anger of God for their sin; otherwise the ends of personal punishment cannot be answered, sinning creatures will not be made to see the justice of their punisher, nor can they condemn themselves as justly deserving such misery. Without this consciousness and remembrance, all our miseries would be nothing but afflictive evils brought on us by our creator, not as personal criminals, but as mere creatures, and consequently not agreeable to the goodness and equity of a God.

Proposition III.

Proposition III. If this sinful and miserable condition of men cannot be supposed to arise from their own personal sins in a pre-existent state, we may enquire then in the next place, whether it may not be derived from some original parent of our race, who sinning against God, lost his own innocence, and therewith lost his habit or principles of virtue and goodness; he was exposed to the displeasure of his maker, and fell under just and grievous miseries.

Such a primitive sinner, if he proceeded to propagate his off-spring according to the common rules or laws of nature, must communicate to them such a sinful nature as he had himself, and they will stand exposed to the natural effects of his sin, as well as to all following penal miseries for their own sins. The same irregular ferments of flesh and blood, and such corrupt appetites and vicious passions, will be found in them also; which still grew stronger before the young creatures grew up, so far as to exercise their reason. And when by degrees they came to know good and evil, and to be capable of actual sin, these vicious propensities did generally, if not always, overcome their rational faculties, did prevail upon their wills to a frequent actual compliance, and led them away effectually to sin against their maker, and so to expose themselves more and more to his displeasure, and to confirm their own habits of sin.

And thus every one of the race of man, in their successive seasons of life, might become personally vicious, or deprived of the holy image of God, by their descending from vicious parents, and were deprived of the favour of God by their own actual compliances with these vicious propensities of nature, that is, by actual iniquities. I think it may be granted, that this supposition will solve the difficulty in some measure, and will go a great way toward an answer to the present enquiry.

Proposition IV. But still this in my opinion seems hardly sufficient to account for the miseries which come upon children from their very birth, for the pains and agonies, and dying groans, and death itself in their infant-state, before they are capable of knowing or doing good and evil, or of committing actual sins: And the reason I give for my opinion is this; these tendencies or propensities towards evil in the infant-state, even though the foul or will complies with them, while there is no possible knowledge of a law or duty, can hardly be called actual sins: Nor can children, while incapable of proper virtue or vice, merit such pains and agonies of themselves as they often suffer. And I can scarce suppose they would be thus punished or tormented by a righteous or wise governor in their infant-age, when they cannot possibly commit actual sin, nor have any knowledge of good or evil, merely upon the account of the necessary propagation of a sinful nature to them from their parents, since they come into this state by that original law of creation and propagation, which a kind and wise creator appointed to his innocent creatures. I cannot account for their being treated as sinners, unless they were some way involved in guilt or sin, as soon as they are born: And I do not see how this can be, unless they have * sin some way imputed to them by their interest in,
and

* By "sin or guilt imputed," I do not mean that any thing or action really faulty, is charged by way of accusation on the persons of infants, as though they hereby become personally faulty or blamable, or that the very acts of sin are transferred so as to make them proper sinners or criminals; but

and communion with some common federal head, surety or representative, who hath actually sinned.

Proposition V. I might add also, that this natural propagation of sinful inclinations from a common parent by a law of creation, seems difficult to be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God, unless we suppose that some such legal or federal guilt and condemnation came upon the race of man by the misbehaviour of a common surety or head. It seems exceeding hard to suppose that such a righteous and holy God the creator, who is also a being of such infinite goodness, should by a powerful law and order of creation, which is now called nature, appoint young intelligent creatures to come into being in such unhappy and degenerate circumstances, liable to such intense pains and miseries, and under such powerful tendencies and propensities to evil by the mere law of propagation, as should almost unavoidably expose them to ten thousand actual sins as they grow up, if they were not born under some judicial sentence of God as a governor on the account of moral evil or sin; which moral evil must be before committed, either by themselves or by some representative.

It is hard to suppose, that the creating power and decree of God, or his law of nature for propagation, should place mankind in such a situation as to render them unavoidably sinful and miserable in a degree, before they have any personal sin or guilt to deserve it, unless you suppose them to be some way interested or involved in something of guilt or sin, which was derived from a common head, surety or representative, who might be appointed by some wise and righteous constitution to act for them ||.

Proposition VI. Upon the whole view of things therefore, I know not how to resolve this difficulty, but by supposing this universal sinfulness and misery of our whole species, to arise from the sin and guilt of some person, who was both a primitive parent or natural fountain of our race, and who was also set up as a common head or legal representative of all mankind: And that he by sinning against his maker, lost his own principles of virtue and goodness, exposed himself and his posterity, whom he naturally produced, and whom he legally represented, to the displeasure of his maker, and so brought sin and misery into the very nature of man, and spread or conveyed this sin or misery through all his off-spring.

I must

but I mean that the children of some first man may be by a righteous covenant, so far esteemed one with their parent when he sinned, as to be in some sense, involved with him in his state of condemnation, and liable to the miseries that proceed from it. This I have made to appear at large in the plainest light, in a short appendix or dissertation on "imputed sin and righteousness;" and I desire all my expressions in this book may be construed in a consistency with this remark, and with that dissertation at the end of the book.

The arguments therefore which are brought against this doctrine, from the impossibility or the injustice of imputing the very actions of one man to another, have no force, since I have so often declared in that essay, that actions are not properly transferred by imputation, but the legal result of those actions.

|| If it could be well made out, that the whole race of mankind are partakers of sinful inclinations and evil passions and biases to vice, and also are exposed to many sharp actual sufferings, and to death, merely and only by the original divine law of their propagation from their parents who had sinned; and if the justice and goodness of God could be vindicated in making and maintaining such a dreadful law or order of propagation through six thousand years; we have no need of further enquiries, but might here be at rest. But if such a scheme be so injurious to the goodness and equity of God, as it seems to be, then we are constrained to seek a little further for a satisfactory of this universal degeneracy and misery of mankind.

I must confess I am not fond of such a scheme or hypothesis, of deriving some sort of guilt from a surety or representative, though I know it has been embraced by a considerable party of christians ancient and modern. No; I would gladly renounce it, because of some great difficulties attending it, if I could find any other way to relieve the much greater difficulties and harder imputations upon the conduct of divine providence, which will attend this enquiry, if we follow any other track of sentiments. Nor do I see any way how to avoid or escape these perplexities, if we abandon this supposition of a common head or representative of mankind, who may be supposed according to a just constitution to involve his posterity together with himself in a state of guilt and misery.

Is it not much easier, to suppose that God looks upon these young creatures not as innocent or guiltless, but as some way involved or interested in sin or guilt, when in the very original course of nature which he appointed, he brings them into being in such miserable circumstances, and so exposed to sin as well as pain? I say, is it not much easier to suppose, that they are looked on as some way under guilt and condemnation, than that the appointment and providence of a good and holy God should bring them hourly into being, in the midst of such sinful and miserable circumstances, and punish them with such early pains and sorrows, while he looks upon them as perfectly innocent and guiltless?

The fact is evident. The great God, who is both just and good, has appointed and continues such a law of propagation, whereby millions of infants without any personal sin or fault of their own are brought into being under these wretched circumstances, inclined to sin, and liable to a thousand sorrows and pains, and death. This is plain and certain fact, beyond all reasonable doubt or contest: Now will not the equity or justice, and the goodness of God be much better vindicated by supposing some original and righteous constitution*, whereby these young creatures are some way involved in the guilt or sin of their original parent and representative, and so made liable to misery, than by supposing them to be entirely innocent without any charge of imputed sin, and yet brought into being daily by the God of nature, in a condition of such proneness to sin, and exposed to such miseries?

And as the glorious and holy nature and actions of God are best vindicated by such a supposition, so without it I cannot well explain the scriptural account of this matter in that one short sentence, *Rom. v. 12.* "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;" that is, sin is imputed, or, which is much one in *St. Paul's* language, "death, the penalty of sin, has passed on all, or has reigned over all," and therefore all are esteemed in some sort as guilty and condemned in the sight of God, though they did not sin after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression, that is, they did not commit actual personal sin against a known law as *Adam* did §. But I give but a single hint in this place, because I have reserved the scriptural account for another part of the discourse.

VOL. VI.

G g

Q U E S-

* The righteousness of this constitution appears plain in propositions V and VI. under question III. and section II. in question IV.

§ I confess that it is from scripture I derive my sentiments on this subject, and I firmly believe this doctrine

Q U E S T I O N III.

How could a holy, a wise, and a righteous God, who is also a being of infinite goodness, establish such a constitution, that all mankind should derive their being from such a natural parent and legal representative, whereby such universal sinfulness and misery should in the event, be spread through all human nature in all following ages?

Answer. **I**F this constitution was not only in itself a wise and a righteous thing in the universal creator and governor of the world, but if it was also the effect of goodness in God, as an universal Father of his intelligent creatures, then surely we shall silence all our censures of it at once. If it was a more probable way, so far as we can see, to secure the continuance of man and his whole race in the image and favour of his maker, though it happened to have a contrary event by the negligence and faulty conduct of the first man, yet I say, it was a more proper and probable means to secure man in his happiness, then all must confess that this original constitution doth not impeach the holiness, justice or goodness of God. Now let us enter into particulars, and enquire whether this constitution be not only just and holy, but also good and kind, and most proper and likely to secure innocent man: Perhaps this will appear in the following propositions.

Proposition I. God created man an intelligent and holy creature, but capable of mistake and sin; a compound being made up of flesh and spirit, or an animal and a mind, with power also to propagate his kind in long successive generations. Now that this could not be unjust, will appear by particulars.

1. There is no injustice in God in creating such a being as man, a creature capable of mistaking and capable of sinning. What if man was formed with intellectual powers inferior to those of an angel? Let him remember that even an angel is capable of mistake and sin also: Nor has man any reason to complain that he was not made an angel; for by the same reason an angel might complain that he was not an archangel: And this sort of unreasonable complaint might upon the same foot have run through all lower orders of being, and would have laid a restraint upon God the creator, from making any lower ranks of intelligent creatures whatsoever. According to this way of arguing, God would never have manifested the rich variety of his wisdom in the various ranks and degrees of creatures; for no rank of beings but the uppermost could ever have been formed. Nay, it may be doubted, according to this

doctrine of the imputation of sin from *Adam* to all his off-spring, according to the sense in which it is explained in the second essay at the end of this book; yet I have endeavoured to shew here, that a careful observation of the world, and the exercise of our reasoning powers, with a very little help from revelation, will lead us into these sentiments, and discover to us the justice of them.

In short, as I have said before, these events must arise from such a constitution or covenant, formed and executed by God as the righteous and supreme governor of the world, or from the sovereign and arbitrary appointment of God as a creator and absolute Lord; and I think the execution of this sovereignty brings a harder impeachment of God's conduct than this act of government.

this way of arguing, whether any creature at all could be formed: For perhaps the highest creature considered merely in his own natural powers might be capable of mistake and defect in duty.

But if it be not an unfit or improper thing for an almighty God to make any creature, it is not unfit for him to make a fallible creature, and capable of some defect, though he was originally perfect. And since he is a God of infinite wisdom, he thought it very becoming his character to manifest this infinitely various wisdom in the formation of a vast variety of ranks of beings, some of which should have higher and nobler intellectual powers, and should be further out of the reach of temptation and mistake, and others of them of lower or meaner intellectual powers, and more within the danger of mistake and temptation. Now this carries no injustice with it, provided that every rank of beings has a sufficient power to guard against its dangers of mistaking, and against the assaults of the temptations to which it might be exposed.

2. Nor was it unjust in God to unite an animal body to this rational mind; for by this union there is a rich variety of new powers arising in that creature, such as sense, appetite, passion, together with all the sensible qualities of colours, sounds, tastes, smells, &c. and the government of animal engines by a mind, all which manifest the various and astonishing riches of divine wisdom in the contriving of such a wondrous creature as man. And if it should be objected,

Objection. That the mind or spirit is exposed to some temptations by reason of this union with animal nature, let it be remembered, that the innocent spirit or rational principle was formed in a state of power and dominion over all the appetites and passions that arise from flesh and blood; and had abundant capacity to resist all these temptations, while reason maintained its superior post in which it was created, and it did govern sense, appetite and passion.

And besides, if there are some supposed inconveniencies attending a spirit united to an animal body, so there are many certain advantages arising from it in the innocent state. The spirit is hereby made capable of tasting all the pleasures of sense, and of the more boundless power of imagination, and making use of the additional powers or organs of the animal, viz. eyes, ears, tongue, hands, &c. and all the vigorous efforts of the better passions, for the discharge of its duty, for the honour of its God, for the benefit of its fellow-creatures, and for the happiness of itself.

3. There could be no injustice in appointing such a creature to propagate its own kind by marriage, and to furnish it with all proper powers for that purpose: For if man continued in innocence, he would then enjoy all the innocent pleasures of numerous society, and some of those too springing from himself in every age, together with all the tender and endeared sentiments and delights of sons and daughters, and as *Milton* expresses it,

“ Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son and brother, ”

which would greatly add to the happiness of his earthly state.

Proposition II. Though man was created with powers inferior to some other intellectual beings, yet he was formed in the image of his maker, and in his maker's favour; in a state of perfect innocence, holiness and peace, with sufficient knowledge to defend and secure him from fatal mistakes, and with sufficient power to resist temptation and to maintain himself in this holy and happy state: But at the same time he was furnished with a liberty of will, that is, with a power to chuse good or evil, to disobey his maker, as well as obey him, to use his understanding well in governing his sense, appetite and passion, or to abuse his understanding, and darken and weaken it by giving the reins to sensuality and his meaner powers: he had a liberty or free-will to watch against temptation or to be negligent, to resist it or to comply with it, to abide in the favour and image of his maker, or to fall from his maker's image and favour, according as he should use his liberty well or ill.

Now here is no injustice, nor any want of goodness in making man a free creature: For it is by this freedom that he becomes capable of moral government: It is this that renders him a proper subject of rewards, if he maintains his virtue and obeys his maker; and it gives him a power of advancing himself by his obedience in his maker's love: And it is this liberty also that renders him a proper subject of punishment if he neglect his watch, and turn aside to the paths of vice and disobedience.

Proposition III. Innocent man had probably some privileges given him by divine favour, above what were necessary and due to the mere state of his creation, viz. he might be indulged to converse with his maker, perhaps in a visible manner, and to receive special and peculiar communications from him: He might be situated in a place of very great pleasure, with all varieties of tasteful food, and other instruments and objects for his refreshment and delight, and with encouragements to hope, and assurances to expect, that if he continued always humbly dependent upon God, and ever watchful against temptation, and attentive to his duty, he should have strong divine aids in case of danger, upon his application to his maker for them. This is a very reasonable supposition, derived from the weakness of man, the fallibility of his nature, and from the abounding goodness of his maker.

Proposition IV. Man was not only by the constitution of his nature put under a law of obedience to God his maker, in whatsoever he should require of him, but also he might have that law set before him in some more express manner, together with the penalty or threatening annexed to it, viz. "If thou obeyest not thy God in the duty which reason requires, thou shalt surely lose thy present privileges and life itself." Now this ought to have been a constant and powerful guard to him against all temptations, if he had the command and the threatening so expressly set before him.

Proposition V. There is also abundant reason to believe, that he had not only a law given him with a penalty threatened for the breach of it, but also a covenant made with him, and a promise given to him, not only of continuing in his present happiness, but of being immutably confirmed and established

blished in immortality; and, perhaps, of enjoying some greater happiness if he continued to obey God and abstain from sin.

This covenant, indeed, seems to be a matter of pure divine favour, above and beyond what was due to him as a creature: For after he had fulfilled his obedience to the law for many years, and continued in the possession of his present comforts, God considered as an absolute sovereign might have annihilated him, and have done him no wrong, so far as I can judge. The great God is absolute Lord of all, and if we consider only his sovereignty and his justice, he might, I think, have taken away from a creature what he had given him without any injustice at all? So that this covenant of life or promise of immortality, and especially of superior happiness as a reward of his obedience, was the mere effect of divine goodness.

And yet we cannot but suppose there was such a covenant made with innocent man, and such a promise of life, and even of superior happiness given him upon condition of obedience during his state of trial, if we consider the following things.

1. I might in the first place argue thus. The great goodness of God, so far as it has been manifested in his conduct towards his creatures, seems to plead for it, that man should have some reward of his obedience, some additional gratifications and blessings above the mere continuance of his present life and peace: For it hath not been the way of God in any of his dispensations with the children of men, so far as we can learn from observation or scripture, to set his creatures at work for nothing. *1 Cor. ix. 9, 10.* God will have the "ox rewarded that treads out the corn by forbidding to muzzle him," and permitting him to eat; and so he will have his ministers rewarded with a maintenance. *Ezek. xxix. 19, 20.* God bestows all "the riches and the spoil of *Egypt* to reward *Nebuchadnezzar* and his army for the service which they had served against *Tyrus*, for they wrought for me, saith the Lord." It is described as the known character of God, and what every man is called to believe, that, "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," *Heb. xi. 6.* And it has been his constant course of transaction with his creatures, to encourage them to duty by the promise of some reward above their present state and circumstances: And if it is thus in our fallen state, why should it not be much rather in the state of innocence?

2. I argue thus: God made the soul of man in it's own nature immortal: Now if man had continued innocent, and honoured the law of God with obedience during all his state of trial, man would have acquired some advances in the knowledge of God, some improvement of his nature, and greater resemblance to God, by a more intimate acquaintance and converse with God in his various perfections and works, and some stronger bias to the love of God and to all holiness, which in itself would have been a natural increase of his happiness. Nor is it to be supposed, that the blessed God would have presently contradicted the nature of things, and that connexion of causes and effects which his own wisdom had just established, that is, the connexion of holiness and happiness: Nor can we imagine that he would have forbid the soul of man to be immortal, contrary to it's very nature, in order to have put an end to the life and happiness of so holy and so obedient a creature; God always loves holiness so much, that he will reward it where he finds it.

And

And if man with this improvement of his nature had continued immortal, his happiness had been still greater, and that without end.

3. God hath wrought into the nature of man an earnest desire after life or immortality, and also a desire of a perpetual change or novelty of pleasures, and that without the diminution of them. The nature of man would be tired with one everlasting round of the mere repetition of sensible delights, of eating, drinking, sleeping, working, &c. or even of the more refined delights of the mind, if there were no novelty, no fresh scenes of pleasure to open upon him; and yet man could never desire new pleasures should be less than those he enjoyed before. Now since God hath wrought this appetite or desire of immortality, and of fresh delights into the very nature of man, it is highly probable that God who makes nothing in vain, would have raised or translated him to some scenes of higher felicity, and thus gratified this desire which himself had wrought in his innocent creature, after man had paid him so much actual honour and obedience in his state of trial.

4. I might borrow another argument from scripture and the tree of life, which in the new testament is made a figure of the advanced happiness of heaven, and the joys which the saints shall possess there. Now though it be not expressly revealed at large in so short a history as the third of *Genesis*, that a blessed immortality should be the reward of *Adam's* obedience, yet there is much reason to suppose that the tree of life could not properly have been any emblem or figure of eternal life under the covenant of grace, if it had not been an emblem, sign, seal, or pledge of this covenant of works, and of this promise which should have made *Adam* immortal, and unchangeably happy; and that probably in the same way as the tree of knowledge of good and evil was made a sign and pledge of the evil that should come upon him, if he disobeyed his maker.

Upon the whole therefore, it is highly rational to conclude, that if man had continued innocent, his pleasures would have been increased, and his life immortal.

Proposition VI. This covenant is justly supposed to reach to his posterity, and include his off-spring as well as himself in this manner, viz. if man continued in his state of obedience, and thereby confirmed or advanced himself in the image and favour of his maker, and secured immortal life to himself, by his obedience during the appointed time of his trial, he should also propagate his off-spring perhaps in that established or advanced degree of the divine image and favour, or at least in the security of immortal life and happiness to them: But if man should bring a sinful taint and vicious disorder upon his nature, and diseases and death upon his animal body, by tasting some forbidden pleasure, and sinning against God, that he should not only lose this image and favour of God himself with all his privileges, but that he should beget his off-spring in his own sinful likeness, and in his own unhappy circumstances, despoiled of the image and favour of God, and of the privileges which their father enjoyed during his innocency.

Now there is no injustice in this appointment: Because life as well as death was contained in the covenant; and the advantages which were to be enjoyed by the obedience of the first man, and his posterity, were as great or greater than the disadvantages which should attend his disobedience.

And

And as there was no injustice in it, so it may be proved, that it was an instance of divine goodness to mankind: For when one man was set up as a common head of multitudes, he must be supposed to have so much the stronger obligations upon his mind to obedience, in order to preserve and secure the happiness of those multitudes, which should spring from him as well as his own, and which would be involved in his misery, in case he disobeyed. No single person standing the test of obedience to obtain his own single happiness, can be supposed to have an equal motive to diligence and watchfulness, and duty, with that man who was entrusted both with his own welfare, and with the welfare of millions.

And besides, it was a further instance of divine goodness as well as wisdom, to intrust that very man with the fate of mankind, who was to be the father and fountain of all their race: For all the kind endearing thoughts that arise from the relation of a father, must add abundant weight to the obligations and the sollicitude which lay upon him to continue in his state of innocence and obedience. If he had merely been appointed to be the representative of millions who were no way a-kin to him, it must have lain with much concern upon the heart of a good and innocent man, as the first man was, to oblige him to watchfulness in his duty; but when every one of these millions in his own off-spring, the obligation is enhanced by all the tenderness of a father, and all the sollicitude that an innocent and benevolent father must be supposed to have for the welfare of those who should spring from him.

And it is possible also that all this might be set before the first man in a very strong light by God, his creator; he might be informed that he should have a large posterity, and that they should all stand and be happy, or fall and be miserable, together with himself.

Proposition VII. Man being furnished with all these principles and powers to enable him to stand his ground against temptation, with all these strong and tender obligations to secure his own happiness and the happiness of his off-spring, was put into a state of trial, that he might acquire the rewards promised to obedience, and do honour to the governing justice and authority of God, while he was procuring happiness to himself and his off-spring.

Proposition VIII. Unhappy man, though placed in these advantageous circumstances, yet gave way to the allurements of sense or appetite or passion, by neglecting his watch, he grew unattentive to the command, the promise, and the threatened penalty, he hearkened perhaps to the temptations of some evil spirit, he rashly determined on the side of sense and appetite, he ventured to break his maker's law, lost his innocence and happiness, his maker's image and his favour.

It is no wonder that he lost his maker's favour, for that depended upon the condition of obeying his maker's command: When man had failed of his duty in the day of trial, God, the governor and the judge, does not and will not treat him with the favour which he shewed him in the days of his innocence and obedience. And we may reasonably suppose, that God who made himself and his goodness known to his innocent creature, and converted with him in a friendly manner, forsook his disobedient creature and departed from him,

him, and gave him none of those kind visits or comforts which perhaps he might enjoy before, nor had he sufficient encouragement to expect divine assistances in case of any future dangers or temptations*.

Nor is it strange, that man should lose his maker's image by indulging one sin; for his nature itself became vitiated by this one sinful action, which may be accounted for several ways.

1. By acting contrary to the principle or habit of holiness which was in his soul, he violated and weakened this habit or principle of holiness: It was a bold venture for him to allow so much as a debate within himself, whether he should disobey his maker or no: But by actually cheating or contradicting his conscience, and by sinning against the light of his innocent state, and his own mind, and reason, he broke the inward spring of conscience and virtue, if I may so express it, which gave him before a constant bent and propensity to holiness and obedience: As we find at this day, when persons of a religious education once violate the restraints of their own mind, and break the bars of conscience, they render it's force much weaker for time to come, and go on to act contrary to it with still greater ease and freedom.

2. When man had once sinned against his maker, his heart must necessarily misgive him, and his guilty fears continually arise: His reason and conscience must tell him, that he was an offender, a rebel-creature, and that his maker had a right to resent his crime; and how terrible that resentment might be, he knew not. Thenceforward he looked upon God with an eye of fear and dread rather than with an eye of love: He might probably despair of mercy when he came soberly to bethink himself, how great was his crime against a God of such majesty and such goodness, who was the spring of his being and comforts, as well as his righteous governor and his judge: And then he could no longer love that God of whose mercy he despaired. And thus by losing the sense of the love of God to him, and by impairing or destroying the principle of love to God in his own soul, he lost, impaired or destroyed the truest and the best principles of all holiness and obedience. He could look upon God no longer as a friend whom he was wont to approach with comfort and delight, but he rather avoided his company, and feared or hated all converse

* Objection. But whatever suppositions may be made by our fancy or reasoning, yet this could not be the real condition of man after his sin, to be thus forsaken of God, &c. because God, as a tender Father of our first parents, was careful to guard and cherish their bodies by clothing them, and he gave them a promise of mercy and a Saviour immediately, *Gen. iii. 15.* and the special aids of his grace on many occasions were vouchsafed to men. He revealed a gospel to them, or a way of salvation, and has been ever since multiplying instances of goodness and grace towards them: This appears throughout the whole bible, so that our only holding up the bible refutes this opinion.

Answer. The great God considered as a righteous governor of the world, and upon the foot of his broken law, which pronounces "tribulation and wrath against every soul that doth amiss," may be well said to forsake his disobedient creature, and that without encouragement to expect divine assistances, &c. These are the representations of the bible concerning God's dealing with sinful men, as lying under the guilt of the broken law, *Rom. iii. 19. Eph. ii. 3.* And in this view even the elect themselves are called "children of wrath by nature even as others;" notwithstanding that God had provided a covenant of grace, whereby multitudes of fallen mankind should be recovered and saved: And he manifested it to our first parents and their descendents in various degrees and on several occasions, even soon after fall.

All this provision therefore for the good of man in this life, or for the salvation of him hereafter, does not hinder the scripture from representing men in their fallen estate under the broken law of works, as miserable and destitute of God's favour, and without hope.

converse with him, as an almighty enemy; and the further he departed from God, the more did the power of sin increase in him, and the love of God died.

3. By indulgence of some sinful appetite or passion, contrary to the dictates of reason and judgment, he weakened his reasoning powers, and gave such a loofe to passion and sense after this victory, that it more easily prevailed over him in all following instances, as is common in his posterity even to this day: Reason opposed and beclouded by strong passion loses it's clearness of judgment; and when it is abused and disobeyed, and counteracted by sensual powers, it grows weaker in all it's exercises about truth and duty, and it's natural and original influence to govern our actions is greatly diminished. The more frequently we indulge an act of sin, the more are we blinded in our true judgment concerning the rule of duty and our violation of it, and the more sensible power does sin gain over us: Then every new temptation works with greater efficacy, and repeats it's assaults with more success: And these victories of sin over the fallen creature, must be still more easy and frequent, when he hath lost all just grounds to expect any manner of divine aids or influences.

Thus it is easy to conceive, how man by committing one sin against his conscience, and by cheating or violating his own reason, by indulging his appetites or passions to prevail over his understanding, and losing his sense of his maker's favour, was quickly deprived both of his holiness and his peace, his virtue and his happiness. His judgment and reason being weakened by his abuse of them, are more easily imposed upon for ever after, and more liable to be deceived in matters of sin and duty, and the restraints of reason and conscience being enfeebled, temptation prevails upon him continually.

Proposition IX. Then sinful and miserable man going on to propagate his kind, according to the law of creation in his own image, and according to the constitution and covenant between God and man, produced all his race in the same degenerate, sinful and miserable state, and circumstances, whereinto he had plunged himself.

Thus mankind are born with evil inclinations, and in the ruin and dishonour of their nature without the divine favour, and without the divine image, cast out of his covenant of love, thoughtless of God, or averse to him, vain and sensual in their desires, exposed to temptations from within and from without, and without any claim or just pretence to divine aid or protection. They are led away by the principles of flesh and sense from early years in opposition to the principles of reason, and to the law of holiness: Their judgment is blinded and biassed on the side of appetite and passion, they are often deceived, and they take delight in their delusions: Truth and duty become less natural to them, and less inviting: They wander in quest of happiness among sensible things, and immerse themselves in vice and folly; they grow up in sin, they rebel against their maker, they throw themselves still more, and further out of the favour of God, by fresh disobedience, and thence arise the iniquities and the miseries of the inhabitants of this world, even from their youngest years, to death and the grave.

Proposition X. To make it yet farther appear, that mankind from their infancy and early years are under tokens of the displeasure of God on the account of sin, let it be considered here, that the first man who sinned might be justly deprived of some of his former blessings by God himself, as a direct punishment of his own sin, as well as by natural consequence he lost others of them: This is evident from what is said before. Now except the mere consciousness of sin, the shame and pain of self-reflexion, or anguish of conscience, which is the natural effect of personal guilt, and belongs only to the personal transgressor, what is there of all the blessings which the first man is supposed to lose either by natural consequence, or to be deprived of, as forfeited to his maker's justice, which his children do not also lose? They seem plainly to be deprived of them by reason of this sin of their parent, because they are blessings which they would have been possessed of, if their parent had stood innocent.

Let us enquire into particulars: Are they weakened in their understanding as well as he? Hath not their appetite and passion too often a superior and prevailing power over their reason as well as his? Are not their thoughts and inclinations early immoral, carnal and sensual, and averse from God and things spiritual? Are not their wills perverse and corrupt? Are not the evil principles of pride, malice, revenge, envy, working in them by nature? Are they not subject to powerful temptations on all sides, which are generally too strong for them? Are they not liable to diseases, to injuries from other creatures, to wounds, pains and poverty, to hunger, thirst and nakedness, to miseries of every kind, and to death itself, as well as their first parent? If therefore all the natural evils, which fall upon, or are inflicted on the first sinner, on account of his moral evil, fall also on his posterity, always excepting anguish of conscience and self-reflexion, is it not evident that they are joined with him in his fall, and that they are fallen from their maker's image and favour together with him? For we can never suppose they all would have been naturally, or from their nativity, so vicious, and subject to so many miseries, and so destitute of blessings, had they been propagated by a parent who had continued in the perfect favour and image of his maker.

Proposition XI. Nor is it strange to suppose, nor is it hard to conceive, that this universal taint or infection, this general degeneracy and desolation of human nature, both with regard to sin and misery, should be conveyed according to an original, wise and holy constitution of God by the means of natural generation from one man to all his posterity; for we see the very same thing actually done continually, in God's wise and holy providence. Do we not find the same sort of vice and iniquity, of disease and death, transmitted from parents to children, and that sometimes for many successive generations? As for instance:

Instance I. In sins. How often do we find a proud, a passionate, a false, a malicious temper, a lewd or a sottish inclination, transmitted from parents to children; so, that the features of their faces are scarcely so much copied out in the off-spring as the vices of their nature? And in some houses from age to age, there is a race of drunkards or adulterers, of cheats or thieves, of cruel, proud and malicious wretches continued in the world.

Instance II.

Instance II. In miseries. How common a thing is it also to have the gout, the scurvy, the stone conveyed down from one generation to another? How does the king's-evil descend to distant posterity? How often does frenzy or madness run in the blood, and taint whole families? How frequently do the diseases of an infamous name, derived from the lewdness of predecessors, make the lives of their off-spring short and miserable? And how many instances are there of a great part of a household that from one generation to another die of the small-pox, or a consumption of the lungs, in their youth, or in the midst of their days?

Now these are evident and unquestionable matters of fact with regard to particular sins and miseries, diseases and death; these things are certain beyond all contest, and why may we not easily suppose the same matter of fact to be true with regard to the general depravation, misery and mortality of human nature? Though the evidences of this general contagion may not appear quite so plain and so obvious, and within the grasp of our survey, yet perhaps reason may have as forcible arguments for it, and by this parallel instance may more easily solve the conduct of providence in this universal depravation of nature.

And indeed I think such parallel instances never would have been found among mankind, were it not for the first and general condemnation which came on all men by the sin of some first parent, and the general depravation of all in that one head of our race; on which the next question proceeds.

Q U E S T I O N I V .

But has it not an appearance of injustice in the creator and governor of the world, to make so many millions suffer for the sin of one?

Answer. **T**HIS appearance of injustice is in some measure relieved, if you consider this one man to be the natural head and fountain of all the rest; even as a sickly and weakly animal among the brute creatures propagates a race of feeble and sickly animals, according to the common law of creation and propagation, viz. that every creature should produce it's own likeness in nature and quality: And the off-spring are exposed to the miserable consequences of those diseases, or sickly qualities which the parent animal communicates to them together with their natures.

And if it should be thought hard or unjust, that a race of intelligent beings should be naturally subject to these laws of animal propagation, together with all the sinful and miserable consequences of it, yet the supposition of the first man being set up as a representative, a surety, or federal head of his posterity, as well as he was their natural father, will do much toward the removal of all remaining appearances of injustice in this part of the providence and government of God.

And indeed I must confess, it is my present opinion, that the mere doctrine of the animal propagation of man, according to the natural law of creation, is not a sufficient relief to this difficulty, without supposing the first father of mankind to be a common federal head and representative of his posterity, as well as the natural spring and fountain of them. And the reason is this :

Reason. Because if this scene of misery arise merely from the first parent being the natural spring of his race, it seems to impeach the goodness and equity of God, who has constituted this nature by a mere arbitrary act of his will: But if it arise from this federal headship, then it is owing to man's sin and God's rectoral justice and wisdom, punishing that sin according to this covenant *. But these two suppositions put together, I think, do best absolve and clear the conduct of providence, and the divine government from all imputations of injustice ; especially if we consider and remember the following things.

1. Happiness might have been secured to all mankind by this constitution, as well as forfeited and lost. If there was on one side so great a risk as the innocence, welfare and happiness of mankind entrusted with one person, so that sin and misery would be brought upon millions if he sinned and lost the image of God and his favour, there was as great an advantage allowed on the other side to all mankind, even the everlasting security of their innocence, welfare and happiness, if this one person continued in his obedience, and preserved himself in the image and favour of his maker : And there appears, so far as we can judge, to be so much equity in this constitution, that if we had no intimation of this account of things from scripture, yet the reason of the thing inclines us to believe, that this might probably be the original appointment of God, the righteous governor of the world.

To enforce this sentiment, let us consider, that if the first man, who stood the surety of his posterity, had fulfilled the obedience required during all his time of trial, it would have appeared as an hardship upon all his posterity to have had each of them a single state of dangerous trial † imposed upon them too, which might have exposed them to temptation, guilt and misery: For since it is plain upon such a constitution, that they were to be involved in the guilt and misery of the first man, if he did not go through his trial well, and maintain his innocence and obedience ; it seems reasonable also, that if he did finish his state of trial well, the advantage of it should have redounded to all those who stood represented in and by him, and confirmed their happiness.

You

* If it should be objected, that this federal headship is an act of God's arbitrary will as well as the natural headship, and so both cases are alike ; I answer, that the federal headship is a most eligible thing to all their posterity, if all had been present to give their consent to it ; and for that reason I call it federal : But a mere arbitrary act of the God of nature seems to carry a harder imputation on God.

† Doth that man write the sincere sense of his own mind and conscience, who charges these expressions about " a dangerous trial for *Adam's* posterity if *Adam* had stood, " with this supposition or inference, that " we are none of us upon a state of trial now, and that *Adam* alone was upon trial for us all ? " and yet to shew that he means this unjust censure, he spends almost two pages to prove, that we are in a state of trial now, because there is a day of judgment coming, when every single person shall be rewarded according to his works.

But let such a man know, that we have ever owned and granted, that we are in a state of personal trial at present, and that the day of judgment is designed to decide that important event. But let it be remembered also, that this is upon the foot of a new covenant proposed to the world since the fall of *Adam*, not that old covenant whereby *Adam* was tried, and having broken it by sin, was condemned and forfeited his immortality, and his other blessings both for himself and his posterity.

You will say, what then would have become of all the millions of mankind in succeeding generations? I answer,

Answer. They might have been seized as *Enoch* was, and translated to the upper world after some appointed time of obedience here on earth. You will query then,

Query. "Would not this time of obedience have been a season of trial to them?" I answer,

Answer. Not a state of dangerous trial, whether they should be happy or miserable; but a season of proper trial and exercise of obedience to prepare them for different degrees of advancement in heavenly places, according to their fidelity and diligence.

And by the way let it be observed, that if the first man had maintained his innocence, and his posterity been established therein, no man would have complained of it, but with thankfulness all would have accepted it as a divine favour and a happy covenant.

2. Remember what was before hinted, that this was the most probable and the safest way, to secure happiness to mankind by one man's having this vast and important trust committed to him, viz. The innocence and happiness of all his posterity; for he was thereby laid under much stronger obligations to watch and guard against every temptation, and to use more vigorous endeavours to maintain his maker's image and favour, than any single person could be, who had only his own happiness to take care of. By this means all the springs of benevolence and compassion to fellow-creatures, and all the tenderness of paternal love and pity to a numerous off-spring, both which principles doubtless were very strong in innocent man, were awakened and set at work to guard against sin, as well as the powers and motives of self-love, and all the principles of self-preservation: So that this constitution of God had not only justice and equity in it, but goodness and kindness.

3. Let it be considered also, that this is a common thing among men, for one person to be a natural representative, and as it were, to become a trustee or a surety for his posterity thereby; by which means they enjoy or sustain the honours or the dishonours, the riches or the poverty, which the merit or crime of their forefather hath procured. If a subject receive from his prince the honour of nobility, and be made an earl upon the account of his merit, together with the royal endowment of a large estate to support the honour, this estate and this honour will descend together to the latest posterity, and the eldest male of his family in all ages is an earl, and enjoys the estate which is annexed to the title. But on the other hand, if a nobleman rebel against his king, and is attainted of high treason, or proved guilty and condemned, he loses his estate and his honour together, he loses the favour of his prince at court, and that nobility which is the image of his prince; and together with him all his posterity are cut off from their pretensions to the honour and the estate: Nor is this ever counted unrighteous dealing among the governors of the world, why then should it be imputed as unrighteous to the great God who is the supreme governor of all worlds?

4. I might add also in the last place, that even where a person is not the natural head or fountain of life to others, yet he may be made their common legal or federal head, their representative or surety to act for them, so that they shall enjoy the benefits of his loyalty and prudence, if he behave and act well, or shall suffer many miseries if he be guilty of rebellion or folly. Is

not

not member of parliament made the representative of the whole county or town, and entrusted with the liberties of those whom he represents? If he assist in making good laws, the town or county enjoys the benefit of them; but if he join with others to give up his own and their liberties to the hand of a tyrant, they also become slaves together with himself. So a plenipotentiary is sent from a republic, suppose from *Holland* or *Venice*, to transact affairs of war or peace, and the whole community which made him their representative, either obtain great advantages, or are exposed to many miseries, according as this plenipotentiary manages his own and their affairs with prudence and faithfulness, or suffers himself to be governed by rash and foolish principles, by negligence or falsehood? Now if any person who is not naturally the head and fountain of others, may be made their federal head or representative, much more may a natural head be appointed to represent them.

And if these things are so far from being charged with injustice in the common affairs of men, that they seem as it were necessary in some cases from the nature of things, why should it be reckoned unjust with God to deal with man in the same manner? And why may not all mankind with the same reason be said to fall into condemnation and ruin in their natural and federal head, and yet the great God be just and righteous*?

Q U E S T I O N V.

Though the justice of these transactions may be granted in some measure, where the representative is chosen by the actual and free consent of all those whom he represents, yet since this was not the case between the first man and all his posterity, since they never consented that he should act for them, nor entrusted him to pass the trial in their stead, therefore why should they fall under the penalty and misery due to his folly and guilt?

TO which I answer these several ways.

1. In one of the cases amongst men which was described before, viz. Where a nobleman by his treason exposes his latest posterity to disgrace and poverty, he was not chosen the representative of his off-spring, and yet the disadvantages that come upon them through his treason are not reckoned unjustly inflicted, though the crime was committed some years or ages before they were born: And indeed, as I have intimated before, how can any person be supposed to be a more proper surety and representative of a large multitude than the common father of them all, who has the obligation of paternal love to take care of his off-spring, and who may justly be supposed to be most worthy of that post of trust and honour.

2. There are a great many instances in scripture, in the common transactions of providence, and the government of God among men, where the children

* See an objection answered at the end of the eighth question.

dren have been so far esteemed as parts of their parents, or as one with them, that they have been rewarded with considerable blessings, and that through several generations, upon the account of their fathers piety or virtue; and they have been also deprived of very great privileges, afflicted with fore diseases and calamities, and even punished with death itself, on the account of some criminal head of their family. So much has it been the way of God's dealing with men in many cases, that there seems to be something of a law of nature in it, that a parent should be a surety for his off-spring, especially while children are not capable of acting for themselves.

And doubtless there is a justice in this manner of proceeding, which is well known to God, though not always so visible to us, for the judge of all the earth must do what is right, he cannot, he will not do any wrong. The seed of *Abraham* were rewarded for the obedience of their father. *Gen.* xxii. 16—18. The *Rechabites*, because of the honour and obedience which they paid to their father *Jonadab*. *Jer.* xxxv. 17—20. The throne of *Judab* was continued in *David's* house for many generations, because of *David's* piety and zeal. *2 Sam.* vii. 16. *Phineas* had the promise of a long priesthood in his family, because of his zeal for God. *Numb.* xxv. 12.

And as blessings were thus conveyed, so were punishments. The seed of *Ham* were cursed with slavery, for their father's crime. *Gen.* ix. 25. All the children were swallowed up by an earthquake, for the rebellion of *Corah*, *Dathan* and *Abiram* their fathers. *Numb.* xvi. 31. * *Achan's* family were stoned and perished with him for his theft and sacrilege. *Josh.* vii. 24. The children of the *Canaanites* were destroyed together with their parents for their abounding iniquities. *Deut.* xx. 16—18. The leprosy was transmitted to the seed of *Gehazi* for his sin of covetousness and lying, *2 Kings* v. 26, 27. Fathers in this case are made as it were the sureties and representatives or trustees for their children, though the children do not actually and formally agree to it; yet surely God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. *Psal.* cxlv. 17.

And we see these events frequently in providence now-a-days. Some families have as it were a manifest entail of blessings upon them, and some an entail of diseases and miseries, poverty and disgrace, on the account of their parents conduct. And I think this is not to be attributed merely to their natural descent from such parents, but in the government of God, parents are made and esteemed a sort of trustees for their children in the good or evil things of this life, which renders a succession of blessings or curses in their families more just and equitable.

3. Though all mankind were not actually present to consent that their father should be their representative, yet the appointment is so just and so equitable in the governor of the world, and also there is so much goodness in it, considering that they were to have enjoyed immortality and happiness if he had kept his innocence, that none of the race of *Adam* could reasonably have refused this proposal. For this father of mankind, as I have shewn, is supposed to have as much wisdom and holiness, and love to himself and resolution to maintain his own innocence and happiness, as any single person among them could

* The scripture leads us to believe that most of their children perished with them, *Numb.* xvi. 27. though some, or all of *Corah's* sons might be absent and escape, chapter xxvi. 11. *Heb.* Beni sons.

could have; and he would have the stronger motives of benevolence and fatherly pity to make him watch over his conduct, and to guard him from sin, having the whole concern of the happiness or misery of his off-spring devolved upon him. The care of thousands, dear to him as his children, and whose peace or pain, whose life or death depend on his conduct, would naturally awaken all his watchfulness beyond the mere care of his single self.

And if we suppose all his posterity to have been endowed with the clear reason and wisdom, the sagacity and solid judgment, of innocent man, and to have had this question proposed to them, "whether they would each act for themselves in a dangerous state of trial, or have their common father appointed as a representative to act for them;" surely they must have chosen their common father to have been their representative: For their reason and wisdom would have assured them that their innocence and happiness were safer in his hands than in their own, in as much as the obligations that lay on him to secure it both for himself and for them, were much stronger than could lie on every single person acting only for himself.

CONFIRMATION of this S C H E M E.

To conclude: I think we may venture to say, that this universal mortality and death, which even our adversaries allow to be derived from *Adam's* sin, and all that long train of sorrows and miseries, which are come upon all mankind, young and old, must arise originally from some "federal transaction of the great God, as a governor, with their first parent, or parents;" and some covenant made with him for their posterity, either expressed or implied, whereby they all justly fall under these evils and disadvantages: Or else it must arise from the sovereign arbitrary will and appointment of God himself, that upon our first parents sin, all their posterity should become thus mortal and miserable as themselves.

Now those who deny this our scheme or federal representation of things, are generally very tender and fearful of allowing any such hardships to come upon creatures by the mere arbitrary will and appointment of the creator, lest they cast a blemish on the divine goodness and equity. And yet I cannot find any possible way to avoid this imputation on the equity and goodness of God, unless the universal misery and death of mankind be derived from some such covenant or federal constitution, whereby they were all as it were included in one head, and he as their great moral representative acted for them all, and by his sin involved them all in one ruin: Whereas if this ruin be derived from their first parent, considered merely as their natural head, the charge or imputation will fall plainly upon the absolute and arbitrary will and sovereignty of God as creator, who thus appointed it.

And let it be observed, that this would be such an instance of sovereignty too, which the posterity of this first man could never have wisely chosen nor consented to, as a thing beneficial to them; whereas this cannot be said concerning the original federal constitution of the first man to be the representative of his posterity, which was eligible by the wisest creature, as well as kindly, wisely, and equitably appointed by the creator.

Q U E S.

Q U E S T I O N VI.

*Man is a creature made up of two distinct parts, soul and body: Now if both these were derived from the parents by a natural propagation, then all mankind may be said to derive their vicious appetites and passions, and sinful inclinations from their first parent, which had corrupted and spoiled his own nature by sin: But since it is generally agreed, that the body only is propagated from the parents, but the soul of every infant is immediately formed by God himself, and united to the infant-body, how is it possible that the soul should be defiled with sinful principles, and partake of vicious inclinations, when it is only the body that properly comes into the world by generation * ?*

Answer I. **A**S the soul of the first man by sinning against God, injured and violated the habits or principles of virtue and holiness that were in his nature, by boldly venturing to act contrary to them; so the vicious motions, or irregular appetites of the flesh, grew stronger in him daily, and prevailed more and more against his reason and his better powers; and these sinful ferments of animal nature, these irregular passions and appetites to unlawful objects, or excessive appetites or inclinations to things that were lawful, grew so strong in this first man, that the soul frequently complied with them, and committed new sins against the laws of his maker.

Answer II. These sinful ferments of the flesh, these irregular appetites, these motions of corrupt passion, so far as they are seated in the flesh and blood, are conveyed down from the original sinner, in greater or less degrees †, to all his
 Vol. VI. I i off-

* Let it be observed here, that not the *calvinists* only, who suppose the first man to be the legal representative of his posterity, are obliged to answer this question, and to solve this difficulty; but almost every sect and party of christians, who allow any thing of original sin or degeneracy, are under equal obligations to remove it.

† Though original sin, so far as it is imputed, is equal in all the race of *Adam*, for it is the imputation of *Adam's* sin, or condemnation by it to suffer sorrow and death; yet original sin inherent, or the corruption of nature, which is propagated from the first man to all his off-spring, has various degrees in different persons. The very animal juices and ferments, in the formation of particular human bodies, may have more or less of the vicious tincture in them. And this may be partly owing to the virtues or vices of immediate parents, or other ancestors, or the particular tempers, humours and constitutions of the father or mother. Hence we say of some persons, they have more natural virtues than others; that is, good temper, compassion, moderation, temperance, &c. And others have more natural vices, such as, cruelty, envy, pride, drunkenness, wantonness, &c.

The reason of this seems to be founded in the present nature of things, though we may not always descry the immediate and particular causes. But the general cause and ground of the propagation of particular vices to children, must be referred originally to their common interest in the guilt or condemnation of *Adam's* first sin. Without this I cannot vindicate the providence of God in the propagation of any particular vices by the appointed laws of nature.

And if it be enquired, why some have more native vices than others, since the ground or demerit of all, is one and the same: I answer,

Answer. That it is owing to the mere mercy of God that every child has not as vile and corrupt and vicious a nature or temper, as the worst; and if every one were equally vicious in their animal temper, the government of God would be justified in the permission of it.

242 *Could the soul be defiled with evil ferments of the body?* Quest. VI.

off-spring in continual succession; and the soul, in it's infant-state, is perpetually impressed and allured by these vicious motions, appetites and passions of the flesh; and it as readily complies with those that are accounted criminal, as with those that are innocent.

It is true indeed, in the mere infant-state, the soul has no knowledge of God, or his law, of virtue or vice, of it's own duty or sin; and therefore, in it's mere infant-state, the actions are not properly human or moral; nor can they be actually criminal in the sight of God, so as to contract actual guilt, till years of knowledge and understanding, and till the mind and will are capable of knowing, chusing and refusing moral good and evil; and at what time this is to be determined, the great God only knows: But when it is capable of exerting any actions of the will with understanding, and such as are properly human and moral, it contracts actual and personal guilt, by these sinful compliances with the flesh or animal nature. Thus original sin, especially that part of it which consists in the corruption of our nature, is evidently conveyed and communicated by the flesh; and thence it comes to pass, that the principles of sin in mankind, and the evil habits both in the soul and in the body, are so often called the flesh in scripture, because the flesh is the means of the propagation of sin, and because the vicious motions and ferments which are in the flesh, lead the soul astray to forbidden actions.

It is granted, the soul has reasoning and reflecting powers, and is furnished with judgment and conscience, yet these are very young and feeble in childhood, and the soul seldom calls them into counsel to enquire or advise; for it finds it much easier to comply with every animal appetite and passion. Thus it practises vice, though in less degrees, as it passes from infancy to childhood; thus it grows up to taste, to indulge, and to delight in forbidden enjoyments. Then as it's knowledge increases, it sins against the plainer dictates of conscience, and with a more criminal consent of the will; thus it encreases it's guilt, and strengthens the habits of sin, both in the body and in the mind, and grows up towards perfection in iniquity, unless restraining or recovering grace prevent.

Q U E S

Q U E S T I O N VII.

But if we allow that it is possible the new-created soul should be thus corrupted, yet is it agreeable to the justice or wisdom, or goodness of God, to create so many millions of souls, pure, innocent and holy, as they must be in their own natures, coming from the hands of God, and to unite them immediately to such bodies, derived from sinful parents, and infected with vicious ferments and appetites, whereby they are so early, and almost unavoidably led into sinful practices and defiled thereby?

And, to make this question still more difficult, it might be added,

Is it not contrary to the justice and goodness of God to create innocent souls, and unite them to such bodies derived from sinful parents, whereby they are subject to many painful sensations, such anguish and agonies, and early misery, before they can know any thing of good or evil, or have committed any actual transgression?

Answer. **P**ERHAPS, this is the greatest difficulty in the whole doctrine of original sin*, and therefore I shall offer at a humble endeavour to answer it in a more particular and distinct manner, by the following steps or degrees of reasoning.

Reason I. Though the soul of man be created by God himself, without depraved or sinful qualities in it, yet it never exists or comes into being, but as a part of human nature; and that not as a piece of new workmanship from God's hand, but as a part of mankind who are propagated from the first parent, by the continued power of God's first creating word, "be fruitful and multiply:" *Gen* i. 28. And thus, though the soul really comes from God rather than from the parent, yet man is to be considered as propagating his kind, much in the same manner as brute-creatures and all animals propagate their kind: And their descendents or off-spring are tainted with any poison, disease or painful infirmity, which is mingled with the blood or animal juices of their sires or their dams. And this is according to the law of creation, and it can hardly be otherwise in the nature of things.

You will say, man does not propagate his kind by the mere mechanism of flesh and blood, and animal ferments; for it is the original and constant creative decree of God that produces a new substance, a human soul, and joins it to this body; whereas the off-spring of brutes are propagated, and come into existence, by the mere mechanical agency of flesh and blood, without any other particular act of the divine will or power, or any creation of a new substance. To this I answer,

I i 2

Answer.

* As abstruse and difficult as this question is, yet almost all parties of christians, who acknowledge any any thing of original degeneracy, are obliged to answer it, as well as those who are called *calvinists*.

Answer. That perhaps few or none of the common appearances of nature, or the constant daily events in the corporeal world, come to pass by mere † mechanism, or the impulse and necessary effects of the motions of the particles of matter without the influence of some superadded laws of nature, beside and beyond the necessary properties of matter; which laws proceed from God's constant uniform agency upon matter, such as the law of gravitation, or the mutual tendency of all the parts of matter towards each other, which is a law of nature, or decree of creation, and is in reality the constant uniform agency of God on the inanimate world: And some suppose elasticity, electricity, magnetism, &c. to be of the same kind, as well as all vitality in the vegetable and animal creatures.

And in this sense brutes propagate their kind, not merely by the mechanical motions of flesh and blood, but by some original creative decree of God, or constant law of nature, whereby matter is impelled into such particular vital motions and forms, and kindled into life in a succession of generations, by a constant uniform act or agency of the divine will.

Let me add also, that it is by this universal divine agency, all animals borrow their breath of life from the air, which is an extraneous substance, which yet is then counted a part of themselves, and is called their breath, and their life.

In like manner, when the infant-body of man is so far formed as to become fit for union with a rational soul, the soul then comes into existence, in union with the body, by an original creative decree of God, or a settled law of nature; and thus, the man and the brute, in their long successions, are both formed by the power of that ancient law of creation, this almighty creative word, "be fruitful and multiply."

I add also, that the soul, though it be a distinct substance coming from God, yet coming into existence in this manner by a law of nature, becomes a part of the man as much as the breath of life, which is an extraneous substance borrowed from the air, or as the blood of the child, which is hourly made out of the food of the mother.

Reason II. In this view of things, the soul of the infant is not to be considered or judged of as a single separate being, but as always in union with the infant's flesh and blood, and as making up a compound creature of the human species, propagated from the parents as effectually to all intents and purposes, as though the soul itself proceeded directly from generation as well as the body.

Reason III. If *Adam* had maintained his innocency, the universal and original law of propagation, would have been just the same as now it is; and the soul had been brought into existence and union in the same manner, and would have kept it's original and native bias and inclination to holiness; for the animal body would then have promoted it rather than led it astray as now it does. And according to the first covenant, the soul of the child might have also hoped, or perhaps by prayer and dependence, have humbly claimed sanctifying influences, to preserve it from temptation and to keep it innocent.

Reason IV. But since the soul, in the first moment of it's being, belongs to a human body derived from the first man who sinned, and that according to the rules
or

† By the words "mechanism and mechanical," in this place, I mean only the mere effects arising from the natural and essential properties of motion and matter, considered only as a piece of solid extension moved: Sometimes the word "mechanism" is taken in a larger sense, so as to include all the superadded laws of nature or motion, which are impressed and maintained, through all the material creation, by the divine will; such as gravitation, mutual attraction and repulse, &c.

or laws of creation and providence, it becomes hereby a son or a daughter of fallen man, and according to the law of creation it is naturally involved in the same circumstances of ruin with it's parent : As the buds and branches that grow out of a rotten tree fallen to the ground, partake of the corruption and ruin, and speedy death of the stock ; or as a feeble and diseased young brute animal partakes of the infirmities and diseases of it's sire or dam ; or as the child of a traitor is born a beggar, though his father were once a lord ; or as the son of a lewd and diseased person derives perhaps both a lewd and diseased constitution from his parent.

Reason V. Then being one of the race of sinful man, the young creature comes into the world under the common estrangement of the whole race from God by sin, according to the original law of creation, and the covenant made with it's forefather, whereby the descendents or off-spring come under the same circumstances with the parent, whether good or bad : And thus the child has no just claim to preserving or securing grace, and amidst all the temptations of the flesh has no right to any good influences or divine aids, but is left merely to the faculties of it's intelligent nature. It is esteemed in the sight of God, as a part of the race that is fallen from their allegiance and from his protection, have lost his image and his favour, and have no hope but in and by the methods of recovering grace revealed in the gospel.

And by the same supposition of the formation and union of the human soul, by some constant original law of creation or nature, and acting as uniformly as gravitation on matter, we answer the difficulty of the soul's becoming subject to the sensations of pain and anguish : At it's creation and union to the body, it becomes a child of *Adam*, and is exposed to the pains of nature, as a part of the curse coming on the first sinner, and on all his natural posterity, whose representative he both stood and fell. But there is hope of deliverance in the gospel from the pains as well as the sins which came into human nature from our first parents ; blessed be God for this relief.

To conclude ; as I have acknowledged this to be the very chief point of difficulty in all the controversies about original sin, so I am doubtful whether this solution sets the matter in such a sufficient light, as to take away all remaining scruples from a curious and inquisitive mind. I confess it is the most probable hypothesis I can think of, and shall be glad to see this perplexing enquiry more happily answered. But if the case itself be matter of fact, that souls are defiled, and exposed to pain, by being united to human bodies so vitiated, we are sure it must be just and equitable, because God has thus ordered it, though we should not find out a happier solution of the difficulties that attend it, in this dark and imperfect state.

Q U E S T I O N VIII.

Suppose it were granted, that this representation of things, if it were true, would in a great measure account for that universal deluge of sin and misery which has overspread mankind, yet what reason have we to believe it to be true? Does the word of God, which is our truest and safest guide, give us the same representation of things, or support this scheme?

Answer I. **T**HE difficulties and darkneses which attend this important question, “how came sin and misery into the world?” are so many and great, that if, by reasoning on these subjects, we can but find any hypothesis, or supposed scheme of transactions between God and man, which will give a tolerable solution of these difficulties, and lead us through this dark scene of providence, without any just imputation or reflexion upon the wisdom, justice and goodness of our creator, it ought to have considerable weight with every reasoning and enquiring mind, if it be not contrary to scripture, though it should not be asserted, and expressly maintained in scripture. It was this same perplexing enquiry that led several of the heathens and greek philosophers into many vain imaginations, and betrayed some of those professors of wisdom into various wild fooleries and atheistical impieties.

Some of them thought that all things were produced by mere chance, others ascribed it to a necessary fatality and irresistible connexion of causes and effects; some of these allowed a first cause or some divine being to set things in motion at first, but without any subsequent interposure or government of a wise, a righteous, or a merciful being. The best of them, that is the *platonics*, fell into the doctrine of the pre-existence of all human souls, and thought that all of them had sinned in a former state, and were thrust down into these bodies, subject to such perverse appetites, unruly passions, and huge miseries, as a punishment for those former sins. Others indulged a fancy that there were two supreme beings, one the spring of all good, and the other the spring of all evil: The *persians* also took up with this opinion, and even a sect of christians was deluded with this doctrine, who were called *manichees*. So great were the darkneses that surrounded this enquiry, “how came sin and misery, that is, evil both natural and moral, to be so universal among men?”

It is evident that this general corruption and calamity, which has overspread all the race of man carries in it at first sight such a hard or doubtful idea of the conduct of God, their maker, and has raised in many a thoughtful person such reflexions upon the goodness and justice of God, and such hard thoughts of the almighty being who formed them, that it ought to be esteemed a great happiness, if we can but by way of conjecture and humble reasoning find a probable method, whereby these difficulties may be relieved, and the objection against the goodness and justice of our maker refuted or silenced*.

Answer II.

* Those who oppose the doctrine of original sin will neither allow our arguing from reason or revelation.

Our

Answer II. Though God hath not thought fit to reveal to us at large in his word, all these particular transactions between himself and the first man whom he created, yet there might be all this and more revealed to the first man; and it might be set before him in full light, to secure his obedience and deter him from sinning.

But if we collect together all that is revealed concerning this subject, we shall find that the word of God leads us into many of the same solutions of these difficulties which our reasoning powers have proposed. Scripture gives us much the same representation of the entrance of sin and misery into the world, as we have already heard, if we will attend with diligence to the revelation which God has made, and this appears in the following particulars.

Proposition I. It is plainly taught us in scripture, that God introduced mankind into the world by the formation of one single pair, one man and woman, whom he called *Adam* and *Eve*. *Gen. ii. 7.* "The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Verse 18. "And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone: I will make him a help meet for him." Verse 22. "The Lord made a woman out of the rib which he had taken from the man, and brought her unto the man." *Gen. i. 27. 28.* "So God created man, male and female created he them; and God blessed them, and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." *Gen. iii. 20.* "And *Adam* called his wife's name *Eve*, because she was the mother of all living." *Acts xvii. 26.* "He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth."

Proposition II. God created man at first in a holy and happy state, in his own likeness and in his own favour, *Gen. i. 26.* "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" and that none of the brute creatures might molest or injure him, but all of them might be for his service, he said, "let them have dominion over the fish, and the fowls, and the cattle, &c. so God created man in his own image:" verse 27. And what this image consisted in, besides in his spiritual nature, and his immortal state, and his dominion over other creatures, we are told by *St. Paul, Eph. iv. 24.* where the apostle speaks of the new man, or the restoration of fallen man to his primitive temper, "which, says he, after God, that is, after the likeness of God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." See more, page 189. *Eccles. vii. 29.* *Solomon* assures us, "God hath made man upright."

Our fathers, as well as some present writers, have abundantly proved this doctrine from several places of scripture; and our adversaries have endeavoured to shew from the light of reason, that it does not agree with the reason and nature of things, and therefore, say they, scripture must be otherwise explained; and they are forced to labour hard to give some strained and perverse interpretations of it to support their scheme: And yet when we come in our turn to search what the reason of things will say on this subject, as is done in the present treatise, then it is replied, "why do we not immediately take our account from scripture?" And we are upbraided, that we set a candle before the noon-day sun, that we weaken the evidence of a certain rule by bringing over it what is doubtful and fallacious.

Whereas all that I have attempted to do here, is to shew that reason goes a great way to teach and prove what scripture asserts, and that reason and scripture agree, as far as reason goes, in one and the same account of this matter. And thus we confirm our belief of this great article of original sin, which we learn both from observation and reason, as well as revelation. Sometimes indeed we introduce one first in order, and sometimes the other, and we place this subject in every light, both of scripture and reason, while we are representing their mutual agreement: And what is there in this conduct that is worthy of accusation, reproach or blame?

right." And *Moses* says, when God had finished all his creation, he surveyed it, and found it all agreeable to his mind. *Gen. i. 31.* "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good:" It was all according to his idea and his will, and well-pleasing in his sight. Man the last of his creatures, as well as all the rest, was very good, was holy and happy.

Proposition III. God originally appointed, that *Adam* when innocent should produce an off-spring in his own holy image, or in the same circumstances of holiness and happiness in which he himself was created: And appointed also on the other hand, that if he sinned and fell from his innocent state, he should propagate his kind in his own sinful image, which may probably be implied in those words, *Gen. i. 26—28.* "God said, let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion over fish and fowl, &c. And God created man male and female, and blessed them, and said, be fruitful and multiply, and have dominion over the fish and the fowl, &c. that is, when you are multiplied, let your seed maintain this sovereignty, this dominion, which is a part of my image, in your several succeeding generations.

And *Gen. v. 1—3.* "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God he made him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name *Adam* or man. And *Adam* lived one hundred and thirty years, that is, after his sin and his loss of the holy image of God, * "and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." verse 5. that is, his own sinful and mortal image, and called his name *Seth*. And "*Adam* died. verse 6—8. And *Seth* also lived, and begat sons and daughters" in this mortal and sinful state, and he died also as *Adam* his father did before him, and his children after him.

It is not to be supposed that *Moses* in this brief history of the first generations of men, should make such a particular repetition of the image or likeness of God in which *Adam* was created, in this place, unless he had designed to set the comparison in a fair light, between *Adam's* begetting his son in his own sinful and mortal image or likeness, whereas he himself was created in God's holy and immortal image: And more especially when the design of the chapter is to shew how every generation of the sons of *Adam* died, it is obvious that *Moses* designed also to shew how this course and custom of dying came into the world, that is, by *Adam's* bringing his posterity into the world, in his own image, as fallen from God and liable to death.

Proposition IV. God was pleased to put the man whom he had made upon a trial, of his obedience for a season, he placed him in a garden of *Eden* or pleasure, he gave him a free use of the creatures for his comfort, but forbid him to eat of the fruit of one tree, even the tree of the "knowledge of good and evil; for said he, in the day that thou eatest of it, thou shalt surely die," *Gen. ii. 17.* that is, thou shalt from that time be liable to death: In which threatening were doubtless included all the infirmities, pains and miseries of this life which tend toward death and destruction, together with death and destruction at the end of them.

And it is not at all improbable, that God should reveal to *Adam*, that he should be the representative of his posterity, and that the consequences of his obedience,
or

* That *Adam* lost this moral image of God by sin, is plainly implied, *Eph. iv. 24.* where we are said "to be renewed after this moral image, viz. holiness."

or of his sin, should fall upon them as well as upon himself. All that appears as narrative and real fact in the bible, might be represented in the springs and causes thereof to *Adam*, so far as God pleased.

Proposition V. As *Adam* was under a law whose sanction threatened mortality and death upon disobedience, and there was a symbol or seal of it, viz. the "tree of knowledge of good and evil;" *Gen. ii. 16, 17.* so it is most highly probable, or rather certain, that God favoured him with a covenant of life, and a promise of life and immortality upon his obedience, because there was another tree appointed to be a symbol or seal of this covenant and promise, that is, the tree of life: So that if he had not sinned against God, he should have eat of that tree, and been established in immortality. *Gen. ii. 9.* "Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree, &c. the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" the one to be a seal of the promise of life upon his obedience, the other a seal of the threatening of death on his disobedience: And therefore after his sin God would not suffer him to taste of the tree of life. *Gen. iii. 22, 24.* "Now lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, and live for ever, — God drove out the man from the garden."

And we may suppose this tree of life did not merely signify the confirmation of *Adam*, in life and immortality if he had continued obedient, but that it also included some advance of happiness, since the fruits of this very tree are made use of in the new testament, particularly *Rev. xxii. 2.* to signify the advanced delights and satisfactions which true christians shall enjoy in heaven by the grace and salvation of *Jesus Christ*.

It may also be observed here, that some ingenious and rational divines have supposed, that each of these two trees, viz. that of knowledge and that of life, bore fruits naturally suited to their federal or sacramental design: That the fruit of the tree of knowledge being poisonous, would convey into the blood of the eater such juices as should irritate irregular appetites and passions, should raise them to an immoderate degree, and should also vitiate the vital powers of man with diseases, and by degrees bring him down to death. And that the fruit of the tree of life being suited to maintain the vital principles of animal nature, should keep the flesh and blood in a temperate state of health, and preserve the appetites and passions in that moderation, as to be always subject to reason and within the rules of innocence: And that it had also some latent virtue, to heal all manner of disorders which could possibly come upon human nature, if any could come, in a state of innocence and virtue. It is described as a plant both of healing and of immortality. *Rev. xxii. 2.* And God would not suffer *Adam*, who was guilty of death, to taste of it after his fall, lest he should raise some false hope thereby to have healed himself of all the poisonous effects of the forbidden tree of knowledge, and should neglect the salvation of the promised *Messiah*.

But the chief reason for which I mention these two trees here, is to shew, that as there was an appointed figure, seal or symbol of immortal life and happiness, as well as of evil and death, both growing in this garden of paradise: So there was a real covenant or promise of life made to persevering obedience, as well as a law that threatened misery and death to man, if he were disobedient to his maker.

Perhaps also we might farther prove, that there was a covenant of life and promise of immortality, and advanced happiness upon condition of perfect obedience, from many texts of scripture.

The first is *Rom. ii. 7.* where the apostle is rather representing the terms of the covenant of works, than the terms of the covenant of grace, and says, "God will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil; but eternal life, with glory and honour to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour, and immortality." And verse 10. "glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good." Here let it be observed, that the apostle, from the eighteenth verse of the first chapter to the twenty first verse of the third, is evidently laying all mankind under condemnation by the law, and not describing the salvation which comes by the covenant of grace; and therefore he uses the words glory, honour, peace, immortality, eternal life, which are the promises of a covenant of works, but not a word of pardon, grace, or salvation, which are the promises of a better covenant: And he represents the means of attaining these original blessings to be "working of good, and patient continuance in well doing, *ἐπιμονὴ ἐν ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ*, that is, continuance in one good work" without interruption or imperfection; but not a word of repentance and faith, as the means of obtaining these blessings. These are therefore the proper terms of the law of innocency and covenant of works, and this is the promise made to perfect obedience, by which no man now since the fall can be justified, as is expressly asserted, *Rom. iii. 20.* though innocent *Adam* might have attained immortality, eternal life, honour, and glory by it.

Text II. It is the covenant of works with the terms of it, as expressed in the books of *Moses*, which is cited by *St. Paul, Gal. iii. 12.* "The man that doth the commands shall live in or by them:" And *Rom. x. 5.* this is called "the righteousness of the law," that is, that which intitles a man to the promise of life. And *Rom. vii. 10.* "The commandment of the law which was ordained to life," shews that life and immortality would have been the reward of obedience to it.

Text III. It will add perhaps some force to this argument, in order to prove a promise of glory and immortality made to *Adam*, if we consider, that when the apostle expresses the fallen state of man, he says, *Rom. iii. 23.* "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," that is, have lost all hope of that glory of God, that glorious state in immortality which God promised, and to which man would have been entitled by his obedience, as chapter ii. verse 7. before cited.

Text IV. There is another text also which has been used to prove, that *Adam* was not merely under a law with a threatening, but also under a covenant with a promise; and that is, *Hosea vi. 7.* "They like men have transgressed the covenant: But in the original it is, they have transgressed the covenant like *Adam*;" which imports that *Adam* was under a covenant of life, as well as a law that threatened death: For there must be a promise of life as well as threatening of death to make a law become a covenant. But I proceed to the next proposition.

Proposition VI. *Adam* broke the law of his maker, lost his image and his favour, forfeited the hopes of immortality, and exposed himself to the threatening of God, to many sorrows in life, and at last to death, *Gen. iii. 17.* "And God said to *Adam*, because thou hast eaten of the tree which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread, till thou return unto the ground;—for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Now

Now that *Adam* lost the image of God, that is, broke his habit of holiness, or destroyed the inward principle of virtue and piety, is evident from the nature of things, as I have shewn under the third question, proposition the eighth. By making such an inroad upon conscience, by sinning against so much light, by giving such a loose to sinful appetite, by losing both his own delightful sense of the favour and love of God, and thereby losing his own love to God; his reason and conscience grew weak to subdue or restrain his inclinations to evil things, his corrupt appetites still prevailed further upon him, for he was forsaken of God, and had not any peculiar aids from heaven to resist temptation.

And that he lost also the favour of God, and some peculiar privileges of the state of innocence, is plain; for he who used to converse with God with pleasure, and was well acquainted with the voice of the Lord God in the garden, by former delightful converse with him, *Gen.* iii. 8. now "heard the voice of the Lord in the garden, and *Adam* and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord:" And when God called after him, verse 9. *Adam* said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and hid myself."

Here it may be noted, that it is very probable, though *Adam* and *Eve* had no garments in their state of innocency, yet they were not entirely naked, but were covered with a bright shining light or glory, as a token of their own innocence, and the divine favour and presence; such glory as angels sometimes appeared in, and such as *Christ* wore on the holy mount, such as arrayed him like a bright cloud at his ascent to heaven, and such as saints shall put on at the resurrection, when they shall be raised in power and glory. But God may be justly supposed to take away his clothing of glory from them, upon their sin, as a token of his withdrawing his favour and presence: For without this supposition how could they be said to be more naked after their sin than they were before? And how could our first parents be painfully sensible of any nakedness, if they had not lost something which clothed them?

God also further manifested his displeasure, by "cursing the ground" for their sakes, and pronouncing upon *Adam* and *Eve* many sorrows, pains and labours in this life, and their "returning to dust" in death. verses 16—19.

Proposition VII. *Adam* after his sin propagated his kind, or produced his offspring according to the law of nature; not in the moral likeness or image of God, not in righteousness and true holiness, but in his own sinful likeness, as one fallen from God, with irregular passions, appetites to evil, corrupt inclinations, and sinful nature. See *Gen.* v. 1—3. cited under proposition III. Those expressions in *Job* seem also to refer to the same degeneracy. "What is man that he should be clean, or the son of man that he should be righteous? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." *Job* xv. 14. and chapter xiv. 4. *David* also says the same thing, *Psal.* li. 5. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Some persons would persuade us, that these words are only an hyperbolical aggravation of *David's* early sins, and propensity to evil from his childhood: But the text is strong and plain in asserting sin some way to belong to his very conception; and to be conveyed from his natural parents, which is a different idea from his actual sins, or even from his early propensity to sin in his infancy: It asserts and shews the cause or spring both of this evil propensity and of his actual sinning which operated before he was born: So that these expressions cannot be an hyperbole, or

figurative exaggeration of what is, but it seems to be a downright fiction of what is not, if original pravity be not thus conveyed and derived.

If we look into the beginning of the bible, we shall find *Moses* describing the universal corruption of mankind. *Gen.* vi. 5. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man was only evil continually." And verse 12. "All flesh had corrupted it's way on the earth." And chapter viii. 22. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." So universal and so early a corruption must be supposed to spring from an universal and early cause, that is, their propagation from a sinful original.

That the ancient *jews* were acquainted with this doctrine, and that this was the sentiment which they had derived from their reading the old testament, will sufficiently appear to any one from the *apocryphal* writings, which were the product of some wise and knowing men among them. See *2 Esdr.* iii. 21. "For the first *Adam* bearing a wicked heart, transgressed and was overcome, and so be all they that be born of him. Thus infirmity was made permanent, and the law also in the heart of the people, with the malignity of the root*, so that the good departed away and the evil abode still. *2 Esdr.* iv. 30. "For the grain of evil seed hath been sown in the heart of *Adam* from the beginning, that is, by the devil; and how much ungodliness hath it brought up unto this time? and how much shall it yet bring forth till the time of threshing shall come?" *2 Esdr.* vii. 11. "When *Adam* transgressed my statutes, then was decreed what is now done: Then were the entrances of this world made narrow," that is, full of pain as the *hebrew* imports, in which language probably this was first written: "they are but few, and evil, full of peril and very painful: For the entrances of the elder world were wide and sure, and brought immortal fruit;" that is, in the world of innocency, men would have been born without pain and lived to immortality. Verse 46. "It had been better, that is, happier for man not to have given the earth to *Adam*, or else when it was given him, to have restrained him from sinning: for what profit is it for men now in this present time to live in heaviness, and after death to look for punishment? O thou, *Adam*, what hast thou done? for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone, but we all that come of thee." *Ecclef.* xl. 1. "Great travail is created for every man, and a heavy yoke is upon the sons of *Adam*, from the day that they go out of their mother's womb till the day that they return to the mother of all things, that is, to earth." These were the sentiments of the ancient *Jews*.

St. Paul mentions his sentiments on this subject in his epistle to *Rome* and *Corinth*, which shall be cited immediately; for he had well learned this doctrine. Nor do I think that text, *Ephes.* ii. 1—4. can be well dismissed from the service of this argument, where the apostle tells the *Ephesians*, "you gentiles were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein you walked according to the course of this world,—and the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we," that is, *Jews*, who were the peculiar people of God, or we christians who are now sanctified, even "we also had our conversation in time past, in the lusts

* The meaning seems to be this, though the law or rule of duty still remain written in the hearts of men, yet there is such a malignity, or sinful tendency derived from *Adam* our root, that the principle of obedience is departed and the principle of transgression abides, while the conscience preserves the rule of duty in man's heart or soul, and yet he has a propensity or inclination to disobey it.

lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others," that is, as heathens. "Even we were dead in sin," verse 5. This is the plain description of all mankind, both Jews and gentiles. Surely they were not born alive by nature in a state of righteousness, and afterwards made themselves dead in sin; but they were dead-born, that is, born in sin by nature, or through a corrupted nature derived from their parents, and were children of wrath by nature, or exposed to the anger of God. But this belongs rather to the next proposition.

Proposition. VIII. As *Adam* produced his off-spring like himself, destitute of the image of God, or defiled with sinful inclinations, so he also produced them destitute of the favour of God, or in a state of disfavour with their maker, because under the same sentence of condemnation, misery and death together with himself. As I have proved this before, by shewing that pains and agonies, and often death itself, which is the appointed punishment of sin, seizes upon children immediately from their birth, before they are capable of committing actual sin, so there are some scriptures which lead us into the same sentiment, as *Job* xiv. 1. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." that is, his short life, and his troubles or miseries proceed from his very birth, or his propagation from his sinful and mortal parents: Otherwise God would not have appointed his noblest creature in this world to have been born to trouble. Yet this is the case: "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards," *Job* v. 7. that is, naturally, for it is owing to his birth and his natural derivation from a sinful stock: We are a miserable race of beings, springing from a corrupted and dying root, prone to sin and liable to sorrows and sufferings.

Yet let it be observed here concerning one man, even *Jesus Christ*, that though he be the son of *Adam* in a large sense, yet by this propagation he falls not under that guilt and condemnation, nor that degeneracy of nature and those sinful propensities which are conveyed to the rest of *Adam's* posterity: And the reason is plain, viz. because he was not the son of *Adam* by natural generation or propagation, but by a miraculous operation of God and his Spirit, taking part of the body, or flesh, and blood of the virgin *Mary*, and making a man-child of it: As *Luke* i. 34, 35. Now this part of the body of the virgin which was assumed by *Christ*, being not a human person, but mere animal matter, came not under the general condemning sentence of *Adam*, and of all those which are naturally derived from him; and it was also purified from any inherent vicious ferments, which might reside in the animal nature of the virgin: And thus *Christ* had no original sin inherent; nor even imputed by the same constitution, and on the same account as other children have; but was perfectly innocent; and consequently he had not been exposed to suffer sickness and death which other children are exposed to, nor subject to any of our sorrows, if he had not been a voluntary undertaker to rescue and redeem fallen man, by having all our sins imputed to him and suffered in our stead. But this is only a thought by the way.

Let us proceed farther in the proof of this sentence of condemnation and death, coming upon all mankind for the sin of *Adam*, and let *St. Paul* in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the *Romans* be brought as a considerable witness. I think this chapter cannot be fairly construed to any other sense. See verses 12—14. On these and the following verses I desire to make these plain and easy remarks.

Remark. I.

Remark I. Here *Adam* and *Christ* are set up as two distinct heads or representatives of their several families: *Adam* was the head of all mankind who became sinful and mortal by the corruption of our nature, and *Christ* was the head of the new creation, or of the saints who obtain righteousness and life by divine grace. Verse 12—14. the apostle says, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned; or as some render it, in whom all have sinned:" And that with full as much or more justice than *Levi* was said "to pay tithes in *Abraham*," his great grandfather. *Heb.* vii. 9. And then the apostle gives this reason to prove this headship of *Adam*: For, saith he, "until the law, that is, from the creation of man till the law of *Moses*, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law:" This cannot mean, where there is no explicate and positive law, for the heathens have sin imputed to them who had no such explicate positive plain law given them; but his meaning is, that sin is never imputed where there is no law divinely established, no constitution of duty and penalty at all. "Yet, saith he, death reigned from *Adam* to *Moses*," that is, yet sin was imputed and punished by death, even upon all mankind both great and small, before *Moses's* law: And the inference is, therefore there was some law or constitution during all the time from *Adam* to *Moses*, by and according to which sin was imputed to mankind; and death was executed upon them according to this law. Now what law could that be besides the law or constitution, which said to *Adam* as a representative, and surety for all his posterity, "In the day thou sinnest thou shalt die?"

Remark II. Observe that the apostle carries his argument yet farther. "Sin was imputed, and death reigned or was executed even upon those that had not sinned after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression;" that is, who had not sinned personally against an express and positive command given to themselves as *Adam* had done. Now this must include children or infants, if it does not chiefly refer to them; for "death reigned over them," death was executed upon them; and this must be by some law or constitution, by which sin was in some respect imputed to them who had not committed actual sin; for without some such law or constitution sin would never have been imputed, nor death executed on children. Yet further,

Remark III. Let us consider that death does not come upon those who had not sinned actually and personally as a mere affliction, or as a necessary and natural effect or mere consequent of their father *Adam's* sin and death; but it was at first the threatening of the law, and now it is a proper and legal punishment of sin: For it is said, that this sin brought "condemnation upon all men." verse 18. Now this is a legal term, and shews us that death is not only a natural but a penal evil, and comes upon infants considered as accounted guilty and condemned; not for their own sins, for they had none; but for the sin of *Adam* their legal head, or representative, and surety, according to this constitution, or law, or covenant*.

In this eighteenth verse, the expression is very strong: "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." It is true the words "judgment came"

* The author has read what opposition has been made to this natural and obvious exposition of this argument as handled by the apostle in this epistle, and he finds such perverse distortions of the scriptures from their plain sense, and such absurd consequences rising from this opposition, that he leaves what he has here said as sufficient to justify his exposition, to the understanding of a sincere and honest reader, notwithstanding all the boasting pretences to scripture and solemn exhortations to attend to it, which are introduced on the other side.

came" are not in the original; but if these words be not supplied, you must necessarily supply some other word of equal importance to make sense, or you must repeat the word offence, or sin, or guilt; and say, "by the offence or sin of one man, sin came upon all men," who are the seed of *Adam*, or it was imputed to them to condemnation. And it is possible this may be the most proper way of supplying that elliptical way of speaking, viz. by repeating the word "sin, or offence." And so in the following part of the verse, "by the righteousness of one, not the free gift," but perhaps it should be, "righteousness came upon all those, who are the seed of *Christ*, to justification of life*." And it may be yet farther remarked,

Remark IV. that in the original *Greek* it is not said, "by the offence of one, but by one offence," that is, by the single offence of *Adam*, when he stood as the head or surety of all his off-spring, and brought sin and death upon them by his disobedience, as verse 19. "by one man's disobedience many were made or constituted sinners," *καὶ ἡμεῖς ἁμαρτωνοὶ*, that is, became subject to guilt and death by a righteous constitution: And the 16. verse seems to have the same meaning, where one single offence is represented as condemning us through *Adam*, and stands in a way of antithesis or opposition to the many offences which are pardoned through *Jesus Christ*.

Remark V. There is yet a farther reason implied in this chapter, to prove that *Adam* conveyed sin and death to his posterity, not merely as the natural spring or parent of their race by propagation, but as a federal head and representative of all his off-spring, and involved them in his own guilt, or liability to misery and death by his own act of disobedience. Take it thus. As *Adam* and *Christ* are here represented by the apostle as the two springs of sin and righteousness, of death and life to mankind, which is agreed by all in their expositions of the last half of *Rom. v.* and *1 Cor. xv.* so the one is represented as a type and figure of the other. *Adam* was a figure or type of *Christ* in this very respect, verse 14. And *Christ* is called the "second man, and the last *Adam*," for this very reason. *1 Cor. xiv. 45. 47, 49.* As one was the spring of life, so the other was the spring of death to all their particular seed or off-spring. *1 Cor. xv. 22, 23.*

Now *Christ* is not only a spring of life, as he conveys a new nature and a principle of holiness to his seed, but he is represented as the spring of justifying righteousness, or of justification, and of eternal life and happiness; as procuring it for them by his own personal actions, by his own obedience and sufferings: So *Adam* is not only a spring of sin and death to all mankind who are his seed, as he conveys a sinful nature to them, but as he brings sin and guilt, condemnation and death upon them by his own personal disobedience. And indeed this is what the apostle, *Rom. v.* from the fifteenth verse to the end, chiefly insists upon, viz. it is "by one man's righteousness the free gift, or rather righteousness, came upon all men, that is, all his seed unto justification of life; and it is by the offence of one man all men, who are the seed of *Adam*, are laid under condemnation," verse 18. "As it is by the obedience of one man many were made righteous, or justified, so by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," or stood as guilty and condemned before God †.

* Or if the word "all" in this place should be construed to mean all mankind, it is still the righteousness of *Christ*, which has provided this way of justification for all men, or this offer of justification to all men, though all do not actually accept of it.

† All the texts cited under this question are explained and vindicated more at large by many writers on this subject, elder and later.

It is true indeed, that *Christ* trains up and prepares his children for eternal life, by making them his children, by renewing them after the image of God his Father, or after his own likeness, or by giving them a holy nature, a principle of divine life, without which it is impossible they should be made actual partakers of happiness; and so he is typified by *Adam*, who conveyed a sinful nature, or his own sinful image to his children: But the chief thing which the apostle seems to have in his eye, in this chapter, is the conveyance of condemnation and death to the seed of *Adam*, and a justifying righteousness and eternal life to the seed of *Christ*, by their being the common heads or representatives, as well as the fathers or fountains, of their distinct households or off-springs; the one involving his off-spring whom he represented in his own sin and death, and the other acquiring for his off-spring whom he represented, righteousness, that is, a right to life and eternal happiness.

Objection I. Some persons have supposed, that it confuses and perplexes our ideas, to treat of mankind thus as one collective body, or to suppose that the race of man have ruined themselves in *Adam* their head; whereas, say they, the scripture often tells us, that God will judge every man personally and particularly according to his own works. I answer;

Answer. It takes away all this supposed confusion, and makes our ideas very distinct and plain, if we consider that in the general sentence of ruin and condemnation for the first sin of *Adam*, mankind may be reckoned as one collective body, under one head, falling under this universal condemnation by the original law of creation, and the constitution of the covenant of works, since it is evidently represented in this manner in several verses in *Romans* v. 12—21. Whereas in the last judgment every one will be personally judged and acquitted or condemned according to their personal behaviour under the several particular constitutions or dispensations both of law or grace which they have enjoyed.

Objection II. We are informed by the word of God, that there have been two general fathers, viz. *Adam* and *Noah*: Now there are three particulars that do summarily and distinctly contain the blessings, endowments and pre-eminence conferred upon *Adam* in his innocent state, 1. The blessing of propagation. 2. The dominion over the brutes. 3. The image of God in which he was made: All which are contained in *Gen.* i. 27, 28. Now the very same blessings and marks of excellency are by God himself declared and pronounced more expressly and emphatically at the restoration of the world by *Noah* and his sons, and for the most part in the same words. *Gen.* ix. 1. "God blessed *Noah* and his sons, and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." Verse 2. "The fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast, and fowl, and fish, &c. They are delivered into your hand; every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you," that is, you have licence to kill and eat them. And again it is said, *Gen.* ix. 6. "Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: For in the image of God made he man."

Now say the objectors, this is a clear and undoubted demonstration that the judgment which came on all men to condemnation, and the expulsion of man out of paradise, did no way alter the primary relation in which God stood to man, and man to God. The love, regard and providence of God towards mankind in general, were still the same as they were to man at his first formation; and our nature as derived from *Noah*, is attended with the same blessings, endowments and pre-eminence, both natural and moral, which were pronounced or conferred on

Adam

Adam, our first natural head as soon as he was created: And we no more derived a corrupt nature from our second natural head, than we should have done from the first, if he had never sinned: And whatsoever came upon us in consequence of the judgment to condemnation, viz, death, hard toil or labour, and sorrow, came upon us no farther, nor in any sense or degree, than what is perfectly consistent with the original blessing pronounced on *Adam* at his first creation.

Answer. This objection as formidable as it seems, may have complete and effectual answers given to it in this manner. It is readily granted that all that is contained in the blessing given to *Noah* is very consistent with that curse of God which came upon all men by the first sin; but that curse is not consistent with the original blessing that was given to *Adam*: And though the words are in the main much the same, yet if we review the history and context, we shall find the blessing of *Adam* and *Noah* differ greatly from each other in all the three particulars mentioned.

1. It is evident that the blessing first mentioned relates chiefly to propagation, and the continuance and support of man on the earth; but *Adam's* blessing was without those multiplied pains and sorrows, which after the first sin, fell upon women in child-birth: It was a blessing of sustentation, or nourishment of man on the earth, without hard toil and sweat of the brows: It was a blessing without a curse on the ground to hinder or destroy the fruitfulness thereof: It was a blessing without death and returning to our dust, which hinders the replenishing of the earth: Whereas the blessing of *Noah* did not take away the pains of child-bearing from women, nor the hard toil and sweat of men, nor that threatened death, which dispeoples the earth continually.

Let it be observed also, that this blessing on *Noah* seems directly to refer to that vast desolation which was brought on the earth, and the lives of men by the flood, as the context plainly shews; and that God would not repeat this stroke, nor suffer the earth to be depopulated by beasts or men. *Gen. ix. 1—7.*

And I add farther, though *Lamech* seemed to have the spirit of prophecy when he called his son *Noah*, saying, "This shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hand, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." *Gen. v. 29.* Yet the curse coming upon the ground abides still in a greater measure from *Adam* to this day, for it brings forth thorns and thistles in abundance. Now *Noah* might well be said to comfort his fellow-labourers on the ground, since he "began to be a husbandman and planted a vineyard," *Gen. ix. 20.* that is, he invented, or rather greatly improved the art of husbandry and cultivation of the earth, and thereby lightened much of the toil of man and the curse.

2. To *Adam* was given dominion over the brutes, which carries in it more than merely the blessing of *Noah*, viz. "That the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast," &c. For notwithstanding this fear and dread of the human form and stature, which in many instances appears amongst the brutal creation, yet sometimes, ever since *Noah's* blessing, they now bite or sting men to death, and sometimes tear them to pieces, which calamitous disasters would never have befallen innocent *Adam*, or his innocent seed; for it was sin only that brought death into the world.

And if *Noah* and his sons had licence to kill and eat birds and beasts, which was not given to *Adam*, a very ingenious writer, doctor *Cbeyne* the physician, supposes that this was designed in the providence of God to shorten the lives of men after the flood, thereby to diminish or limit their great wickedness: And probably it had this effect to shorten life, which vegetable food would have prolonged.

3. The image of God in which *Adam* was made at first consisted eminently, if we will believe *St. Paul*, "in righteousness and true holiness." *Eph. iv. 24.* for the christian is required to "put off the old man, that is, the sinful temper which he brought into the world with him, which is corrupt, and to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, to put on the new man, or holy temper, which after God, that is, in resemblance of God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Whereas that part of the image of God, which remained after the fall was the natural image of God, viz. the spiritual faculties and immortality of the soul, or the political image of God in a degree of dominion over the creatures; so the image of God signifies. *1 Cor. ii. 7.* Or perhaps in the "corporeal image, or form," that is, in that majesty of stature and countenance wherein God himself appeared and conversed with *Adam* in the garden; but the moral image was lost or defaced, or else it could not be said to be renewed.

I think it is sufficiently evident that the blessing given to *Adam* in innocency, and that given to *Noah* after the fall, differed in such very important things that the one was consistent with the condemnation and curse for sin, and the other was not: And consequently the race of man is far from standing in the love and favour of God in the same manner as *Adam* stood while he was he was innocent.

Thus in a few pages, I think I have made it appear, that the holy scripture both in the old and new testament, and the *jewish* church in the intermediate time, seem to give us the same sentiments of the conveyance of sin, misery, and death from the first man *Adam* to all his off-spring, and encourage us to receive, as divine truth, that same doctrine of original sin, which human reason approves as most probable.

Q U E S T I O N IX.

What can the light of nature discover concerning the proper penalty due to the sin of man, or the proper punishment inflicted on man for sin?

First, **L**ET it be observed here, that we must distinguish between the natural consequences of sin, and the legal penalty appointed for it by God as a governor. The question therefore is not, "what can the light of nature discover of the dreadful consequences of sin among mankind? But what can it discover to be the proper penalty for sin appointed or inflicted by the maker and governor of the world?" After this distinction we may proceed to answer these enquiries according to the following propositions.

Proposition I.

* I know it has been said upon some occasions, that God, as the wise creator and governor of the world, has appointed such a connexion between sin and sorrow, that the natural effects or consequents of sin may be reckoned the appointed or legal penalties of it. And no doubt there is so far a truth in it, as that on some occasions it may be proper to set things in this light, to shew the wisdom of providence. But still it must be acknowledged there is a real difference between the natural connexion of things by God as creator, and the established or appointed laws and rules of government, made by the same God as a ruler of the world: And this will plainly appear in what follows.

Proposition I. The remorse or anguish of conscience is not so properly a punishment inflicted of God upon man for sin; but it is rather a natural consequent or effect of guilt. It is an inward vexation of mind that arises when the sinner seriously considers and reflects on the provocation he has given to his almighty maker by his own folly and rebellion, and a painful fear and expectation of the vengeance due to such personal crimes. This can neither be transferred nor conveyed to any other person whatsoever, but is confined to the heart or conscience of the criminal: It flows from his own consciousness of his own personal offence, which consciousness can belong only to himself, and can raise those sharp inward self-reproaches in none but himself.

Proposition II. Man's continuance in sin after his first crime, and the sinful inclinations and growing depravity of his heart, whether they be considered as in himself, or as communicated to his off-spring, cannot properly be inflicted by the hand of God as a penal evil, or as a legal punishment for his first sin: For though man be a sinner, God remains eternally holy, and he cannot infuse any degree of unholiness into the nature of his creatures, nor constrain them by any positive influence to continue in their disobedience, though they have begun to disobey him.

It follows therefore, that the continuance of man in a course of sin, his vicious inclinations and the depravity of his nature, whether abiding and encreasing in himself, or transmitted to his off-spring, must be conceived rather as the natural effect and consequence of his first disobedience to God, contrary to the laws of his reason and conscience, as I have shewn under question III. propositions VIII. IX. These are not to be esteemed as a proper penalty or punishment inflicted by the hand of God, his maker or his governor.

Yet it must be acknowledged too, that had there not been such a federal representation of all the race of men, in or by their first parent as their surety, whereby the children were fallen under the general sentence of condemnation together with their parents; surely I think a just and gracious God would never have suffered the innocent children of a criminal parent to be infected and tainted with the vicious ferments of flesh and blood, and those corrupt appetites and passions which are now transmitted to children from that first parent; but he would have found a way to prevent that sinful contagion. See question II. propositions IV. V. VI.

But now it may be fairly allowed, since children are involved in this general and original condemnation by the sin of their parent, the great God, as an offended governor, lets his appointed course of nature take it's way, and communicate the natural effect of one man's sin to his off-spring in the deprivation of their temper, and vicious inclinations*.

And it may be further allowed, that man having provoked his maker by sin, and he with his off-spring lying under condemnation, they may be all left under the assaults of numerous temptations, and they have forfeited all manner of assistances that they might otherwise have hoped for from their maker against new temptations and new dangers of sinning; so that God may leave man to his own evil appetites, and the inclinations of his corrupt heart; and then he has only the natural powers of his understanding and conscience left him to resist temptations

* See the objections and answers at the end of the first essay.

tations from within and without, which powers are naturally darkened and weakened by his fall.

Proposition III. Man having once broke the law of his maker and violated his allegiance to the universal governor of the world, hath for ever deprived himself of all hope of obtaining or recovering any special favours from his maker by perfect obedience; for he can never undo the evil that he hath done: He who hath sinned but once, can never more plead innocence, or acquire a right to any blessing which he might hope for if he had continued innocent and obedient. Whether this may be esteemed only as a natural consequent of sin, I will not now dispute; but it rather seems a penal forfeiture of all his hopes, and of his maker's further favours.

And this hope of favour from his maker and his God, to be obtained by perfect obedience, is still put further out of the reach of man, when it is evident he continues to practise disobedience, and multiplies his offences against God, his maker, in the course of life.

Proposition IV. Man having sinned against a being so greatly superior to himself in worth and excellency, as well as in authority, he could never do or suffer any thing by way of recompence or penalty, that would make full atonement or satisfaction to God for his offence.

1. All that he could do, in a way of obedience or service for time to come, would be no more than his duty which he owes to his maker by the law of nature; and if he had not sinned, God has a right to all his duty; and therefore future obedience could never atone for a past sin.

2. All that man could suffer would make no satisfaction for the offence: For if offences amongst our fellow-creatures of different characters, such as a neighbour, a brother, a father, a king, are aggravated according to the character and dignity of the person offended, then the offence against God is as highly aggravated above all offences of fellow-creatures, as the nature of God is superior to the nature of creatures: And if this be so, then every offence against an infinite God, carries a sort of infinity in the nature of it: And divine wisdom only can fix the proper punishment for such offences, though divine goodness may join with wisdom, to set the actual limits of it.

Proposition V. But thus much we may infer by our own reason, with more evidence and certainty, that man, by his sin against his maker, has forfeited all his maker's benefits. The great God having given man all that he has, viz. his nature and existence, the life of his body and soul, all his powers, his comforts and his hopes, and this God being offended and provoked by the sin of his creature man, who has by wilful rebellion renounced his allegiance; this God, I say, has a just right to resume all that he has given him, he may take away all his own favours from a rebel, he may annihilate and destroy him utterly, both soul and body: And by this utter destruction, man is punished with the everlasting loss of his being and consciousness, his soul and body, and all their comforts; which destruction, as it is due to every sin against God, so perhaps it is a punishment not improper to be inflicted for the least sin; and yet it is in some sort commensurate to the infinite evil contained in sin, as it is a loss of all blessings for an infinite duration, that is, for ever and ever.

But

But since, in actual transgressions, there are different degrees of aggravation, God in his wisdom and justice may suit the degree of punishment exactly to the degree of every man's offences; and yet, by making any part of it eternal, may answer the infinite demerit of sin. According to the different aggravations of sin, God may deprive the sinner of some of his powers, and of all his comforts, and leave him only an existence in misery for a thousand years, or for ever: He may take away his bodily life, and leave his spirit according to it's own immortal nature, to exist for ever in sorrow and anguish of mind, as a natural consequence of sin; he may deal with him as he pleases, and re-assume as many of his gifts and blessings as he will, limiting the exercises of his own goodness, or his punishing justice, as his wisdom sees fit; and he may also punish him with a most painful sense of new-inflicted evil, as well as with the loss of all good. This seems to me to be the most natural notion that man could arrive at by the mere light of reason, viz. that sin against God forfeits all that man has received from God; and gives God, as a righteous governor, a right to resume it all, or as much of it as he pleases; and perhaps this is what is eminently signified by the word "death," which scripture threatens as due to sin. See more in the marginal note, and question XI. section I. This therefore I shall treat of more largely and particularly.

Proposition VI. But first, I would take notice of that remark, which Mr. *Locke* makes on the last verse of the first chapter of the epistle to the *Romans*, where the apostle expresseth himself thus concerning the wicked heathens, in our common reading, viz. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." But Mr. *Locke* endeavours to correct this reading by a direct contradiction of it, and that borrowed from one manuscript only; viz. "Who knowing not the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death:" That is, as he explains it, they knew not that God had pronounced death to be the wages of sin.

I grant indeed the heathens knew it not to be a divine revelation; but their own reason could and might tell them, that if they had offended God, the original and sovereign giver of life, they had forfeited this life, and that God might deprive them of it, that is, put them to death; and as he had given them health as well as life, so he might lead them down to the grave by many and long sicknesses and sorrows, depriving them of health and ease*.

Here then is a very natural and evident account whence all the maladies, sufferings, miseries and death that attend mankind may arise. Reason teaches us that they are all the natural or penal effects of sin, and of the anger of our maker for sin: For man being a rational and intelligent creature, must come out of the hands of a God perfectly holy and perfectly good, in a state of innocence, virtue, health and peace; this the goodness of God seems to require: And whatever pains or miseries attend him, cannot be the necessary consequences of his nature as a creature,

* Here note, that as human life often includes not only existence, but all the blessings that attend it, and all possible enjoyments whatsoever, more especially such as are visible and sensible; so the word "death" in the general notion of it, and in the most obvious and common sense of mankind, may reasonably include a loss of every thing which man possessed, that is, existence itself together with all the blessings of it: And consequently when "death" was threatened for sin, it more obviously appeared to signify, that by sin man forfeited every thing that he had received from his maker. This, I say, might be the first and most obvious signification of the word "death," when it was considered as reaching only to things visible, though afterwards it's sense might be enlarged or limited on particular occasions as the invisible world came further into the notice of men.

creature, because as such he must be made innocent and undeserving of pain; but it must be therefore the fruit of some voluntary choice of evil, or some early and universal offence against his maker. How can we suppose that a just and merciful God would inflict on every man so much natural evil, or pain and death, where there was no moral evil to deserve it, no sin to procure it?

Proposition VII. Reason or the light of nature would further inform us, that since all mankind are sinners, and since God, the righteous governor of the world, sees fit to punish them for their sins, and not to deal with them as though they were innocent, the same righteous God, as I hinted before, would think it proper to punish greater iniquities with greater miseries, and to deal more gently with those whose sins were of a lesser kind; or that such who have some degrees of virtue found among them, or less degrees of guilt, should feel a lesser and easier punishment.

Proposition VIII. Now the common observation that every man makes of the affairs of this world may sufficiently inform him, that there is almost an infinite difference in the moral characters and practices of men, and in their deserts of punishment. It is plain as the sun-beams, that all men in the world may be divided into these three sorts of persons.

1. There are some persons of an abandoned and profligate character, whose whole life is a continued affront to their maker; they have no regard to God as their Lord and ruler, they are perpetually guilty not only of wilful neglects of God, but of vile impieties and blasphemies against him, as well as false or malicious, cruel or bloody practices against their fellow-creatures.

2. There are many others that have much less degrees of vice or impiety than the first sort, and seem to be led into sin, not from such impious principles as the former, and practise it no farther than the common gratifications of sense and appetite, ease and indulgence strongly allure them: They have several natural virtues, as temperance and good-humour, and compassion, they do some good and but little mischief in the world, so that if man were to be their judge, he would not know whether to pronounce them good or bad, or perhaps rather would justify them.

3. There are a few whose lives for the most part are filled up with outward practices of virtue with regard to themselves and their neighbours, as well as religion towards God, and there seems to be sincere love in their hearts towards God their maker as far as man can see; there are all the signs of true piety in them, though it is granted there is no man innocent, "not one of all mankind perfectly righteous, who doth good and sinneth not." These three distinct characters plainly appear to every observer, viz. the very good, the very bad, and the indifferent, which we cannot certainly determine whether they be good or bad.

Proposition IX. The same common observation will also inform us, that there are no such actual distinctions in the providence and conduct of God as a governor, made amongst mankind, by the comforts or sorrows which are allotted to them here in this world, as do in any measure answer to or correspond with these three distinct moral characters of men according to their visible virtues or their vices.

vices*. Sometimes it falls out in the course of providence, that the best men, and those that have least of sin in them, are made very unhappy even till death, by many calamities or oppressions: And the worst of men abound in the comforts and pleasures of the present state, with very few uneasinesses: And we find among the middle sort of men, some a thousand times more unhappy than others. We sometimes see, that men are rendered more miserable in this life, even by their virtue, which will not suffer them to practise iniquity, in order to procure their pleasure or peace. The strictness of their piety exposes them to many persecutions from the wicked world. In short, in this world, all things come so much alike to, all, that the love or hatred of God is not to be known by the course of his daily providences, as *Solomon* and *David* his father have both observed and complained, *Eccles. ix.* and *Psal. lxxiii.* if *David* wrote that psalm.

Proposition X. From this view of things, every considering person must infer, what some of the ancients did infer from the same view, viz. that the death of the body must not make an entire end of man, but that there will be a future state after death, wherein the righteous governor of the world will call men to account for their behaviour here, and will manifest the wisdom and equity of his government, by rendering to every one according to their works; he is a God who knows the inward real characters of those whom we call indifferent, and sees all the alleviating or aggravating circumstances of every sin: And he will measure out the sorrows of evil and impenitent persons in a just proportion to their sins, and will make his final retributions exactly answerable to their present characters.

This argument assures us that sins, especially of greater aggravation, will be punished in a world to come after the death of the body. And since the soul is in it's own nature immortal, God the great governor of the world may punish sin by not seizing the forfeited soul into death, that is, by letting it live in anguish of conscience, or other inflicted pains from his own hand: For where every thing is forfeited, the governor may resume as much or as little as he pleases.

Proposition XI. Whether the great God, the governor of the world, will only continue the souls of men in their state of natural immortality after the death of the body, and judge and recompense them hereafter only in that separate state, according to their behaviour here; or whether he will raise their bodies up from the dead, that men may be treated according to their moral character, and recompensed hereafter both in body and soul, this enquiry cannot be resolved and determined by the light of nature. The mere reason of man can never prove certainly the doctrine of the resurrection, though it may look something probable that those spirits who have actually obeyed or sinned in their union with animal bodies, may be again united to bodies, which may become instruments of their recompence, whether of pleasure or punishment.

Proposition XII.

* Though I mention three characters of men here, I do not suppose there are three different states of men now, or will be hereafter, for all the indifferent are really good or bad, they do really love God, or they do not love him. But this life is a state of such disguise and darkness, that we mortals cannot judge who are inwardly good, and who are inwardly bad, among those who obtain the middle or mixed character; and therefore I call them indifferent.

Proposition XII. And though, I think, it can never be fully proved by the light of nature, that an offended God will certainly forgive the sins of the best of men, so as to demand no punishment of them in the other world, and for this reason many of the ancient heathens thought there would be a state of penance or purgation, even for men of moderate virtue, yet it may be certainly concluded, that from the equity and holiness of God, the punishment of the wicked and profligate among mankind, shall be vastly greater than the punishment of those who had much more virtue, and better sentiments and practices of piety. Nature teaches us to say with *Abraham, Gen. xviii. 25.* " Shall the righteous be as the wicked? That be far from the Lord: Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" And therefore some of these heathens supposed the souls of these very vicious persons after death, to be sent into sharper torments, and that for a longer duration, if not for all the length of their natural immortality.

Proposition XIII. And I think it may be also inferred, with some probability, from the most abundant goodness of God, that if he does not entirely pardon the penitent, and if there be any punishments necessary in the other world, for more virtuous persons by way of purgation, because even the best have sinned, not only these punishments shall be much lighter than the miseries of those vicious creatures who have lived a long life of constant impiety; but it seems probable also from the same infinite goodness, that there will some reward for those that have sincerely repented of their sins, in the faith or hope of his mercy, have asked forgiveness of their maker, and have endeavoured to honour him, though with many imperfections, and to serve their fellow-creatures from a right principle of love to God, and love to man, if any such shall be found among mankind. But this leads directly to the next question.

Q U E S T I O N X.

What can the reason of man, or the light of nature find out concerning the recovery of man to the favour of God? Or what hope of pardon and happiness can sinful mankind ever obtain by the mere exercises of their own reason?

Answer. **H**UMAN reason, exercising itself on this subject, might probably fall into such a train of thoughts as this.

Proposition I. It is certain that a sinner's repentance of past crimes, and asking forgiveness for them, together with sincere promises of better obedience, are no satisfaction to a governor for the dishonour done to his law by any capital offence: Nor is it ever counted in human governments a compensation for the injury done by the criminal to the authority of the governor, or to the public welfare: And therefore the criminal among men must be punished by the law,

to

to guard the honour of the government, and secure obedience to the law, and he must yield his life for his offence, notwithstanding all his repentings. Nor is the governor thought too severe or cruel who requires it, nor is his goodness blemished by it. And in the same way of reasoning, we may suppose that repentance, and asking forgiveness, and better obedience for time to come, are by no means a satisfaction to the great God, the lawgiver and the governor of the world, for the injury done to his divine authority and his government by former sins: Nor can his goodness be justly reproached if he insist on the punishment of the offender. If lenity should be always practised, and sinners should come off always without punishment, there would be no sufficient guard and defence to maintain the authority of the lawgiver amongst his subjects, and to deter them from new offences.

I add further also, that it is not possible that any future virtues of a former offender, or any future instances of obedience, can make atonement to God, and give a recompence to him for past iniquities, or repair the honours of the broken law, because the creature owes his highest and best services to God his maker, according to the law of creation, and he can never do more than was his duty.

Proposition II. Yet when we consider God not only as a righteous governor, that will vindicate his own honour and authority, but also as a God who is holy, and loves holiness in every degree, and is also the most beneficent and merciful Father of his miserable creatures, we may reasonably suppose he will encourage and reward every little appearance of goodness that he sees amongst them, where he can do it with a salvo to his honour and government. And when we further observe, there will be wicked creatures in abundance for him to make the objects of his vengeance, and to testify his severe displeasure against sin, and vindicate the honour of his broken law; surely we may suppose it very probable by the light of nature, that where any person of the race of men does repent of sin, does return to his obedience to his maker, and practise piety towards God, and single and social virtues, so far as he has any powers, opportunities or advantages to find out and perform his duty, we may probably suppose, I say, and hope, that God will favourably pass by the transgression of such creatures; and especially when we consider, that the prevalence of corrupt nature sometimes is almost unavoidable in the present state of sin and temptation in which they were born, we may reasonably hope that the blessed God will put all these considerations into the balance, and will make gracious allowances for them: Upon this account we may have some reason to think, that virtuous and pious men, though their hearts or lives are blemished with some sins and frailties, will not go without some sort of reward. It is probable that God will make it appear in a future state, that his goodness has some regard even for imperfect virtue, in repenting sinners, as well as his justice demands it's due honours in the punishment of criminals, who continue in their rebellion without remorse.

Proposition III. It might be added yet further, to enforce this consideration, that since God preserves mankind notwithstanding their daily offences, and affords them so many circumstances of ease and pleasure, giving them sun and rain, and food and delight in this world, together with the long forbearance of punishment; since he continues their natural powers, and the operations of

the reason and conscience of men, dictating their duty to them, approving their good actions, and reproving them for their vices, in order to excite and encourage them to the practice of virtue, we may probably infer that he is now standing upon some terms of mercy with them, that they are upon their good behaviour, and are placed in a state of trial or probation, for future rewards or punishments, and that they are not utterly abandoned as condemned criminals, without hope, and merely waiting for the time of execution.

Proposition IV. From all these considerations the light of nature may probably infer, that God has designed some way of salvation or recovery for poor sinful wretched mankind: And that if there be any such thing as an atonement necessary to answer for the sins or failings of virtuous persons, so that God may forgive them with more honour to his law; it is probable that God will provide this atonement for them, since it is impossible that the guilty creature man can find out or produce any such atonement for himself, he having forfeited all that he has by sin, and nothing that he can do can answer the present and future demands of obedience; much less can he make a recompence for a past disobedience.

Though reason is utterly at a loss to find out the secrets of divine government, and the methods that God has taken to honour his law, and vindicate his authority by the sufferings of his Son *Jesus Christ*, which are revealed to us in the gospel, yet the reason of man may hope, that repenting sinners, and men who practise virtue and piety, so far as the light of nature can assist them, shall be made partakers of this mercy and this salvation, though they know not the particular methods whereby it is brought about; for if the continued forbearance and goodness of God invites and calls them to repentance, which *St. Paul* confesses, we hope it will also invite and incline him to forgive, where this goodness has attained it's proper design on his creatures, and brought them to repent.

Proposition V. Reason also will give us this further information, that if God has provided any way or method of recovery for sinful and miserable man to his image and to his favour, he has taken effectual care that some part of mankind shall be certainly recovered and saved by it: And that he has not left it merely and utterly to the uncertain prospect of what the free-will of men would do toward their own recovery, under all the disadvantages of a tempting world without, and sinful appetites and passions within, lest all the provided methods of recovery be neglected, and none receive it, and be saved. Surely the all-wise God would take care that such a glorious salvation should not be provided and proposed in vain.

Proposition VI. It is probable therefore that the grace or goodness of God, in conjunction with his wisdom, would or did fix upon some persons among degenerate mankind, to whom he resolved this way of salvation which he has provided should be effectual: And for this end, either did or would place them in circumstances of less temptation, or give them greater advantages for the improvement of their minds, and by proper providences would awaken their natural consciences, or set before them the differences of virtue and vice, with all their consequences in a future state, in a stronger light, and with more powerfu

powerful conviction; and that all these persuasive methods might not miscarry, it is probable that he would give some divine touch to their spirits, if it were necessary, and would cause them to point toward himself, and a future happiness.

Proposition VII. Nor is there just reason for any criminals to complain against the goodness of God, for effectually leading some of their fellows into a certain and secure method of salvation, since they sustain no injury thereby. Why should their eye be evil, because God is good?

Let this matter be examined and scanned as far as it will by the powers of reason and present observation, and we shall find no such terrible consequences from the doctrine of God's choice, or appointment of particular persons to obtain this eternal salvation, as some learned men have imagined, provided that none of the rest are thereby prevented and hindered by any act of God.

Proposition VIII. Our eyes see plainly, and our constant observation of mankind assures us, that far the greatest part of them are not pious and holy, but sinful and rebellious against their maker, and are wilfully running on in the paths of sin and madness, to condemnation and punishment; we must be convinced daily, that the bulk of mankind are by no means fit to be admitted into a heaven of happiness, which consists in the knowledge, love and enjoyment of God; nor are they at all inclined to repent and return to God; but that they are rather rendering themselves daily fitter objects of divine displeasure; and, to all appearance, the greatest part of them are like to be punished in another world, for sins committed in this.

Now when the great and blessed God had provided a means of recovery sufficient for all these sinners, and yet foresaw them disinclined to accept of it, would it be unjust in him to resolve that some should certainly be recovered by it? Might he not, in consistence with equity and justice, form a decree that all these vicious and wretched creatures should not be utterly miserable; but that he would take certain and effectual care to save some of them from this madness and misery? When he had provided such a way of recovery as might secure the honours of his own government, might he not resolve to spare and save a considerable number of them? And, in pursuit of this resolution, might he not set things necessary to their salvation in such a light before their eyes, as that they should see their danger and their only hope, and be powerfully persuaded to repent of sin, and trust in the divine methods of mercy? Might he not thus engage and incline them to lead new lives, that their souls might be fit for happiness after death, in another state?

Would not such a conduct be a manifestation of great grace and favour in God to men, even though he did not extend this favour to all the race of mankind? What injury doth he do to the rest on whom he doth not bestow this favour? May he not, as a wise and righteous governor, see fit to let many rebellious subjects go on in their own impenitence and folly, till they receive the just desert, as well as necessary consequence of their own rebellions? What possible reason of cavil can be raised against a sovereign creator, Lord and benefactor, if he should act thus with his sinful creatures, since his goodness to some doth not in the least hinder others from obtaining the salvation which is offered to all?

Proposition IX. As for the rest of degenerate mankind, does not their actual continuance in their rebellion and sinfulness shew us, that though the way of salva-

tion provided has a sufficiency in it to save them all, yet their salvation is not secured? But they are continued under many mercies, and the common operations of reason and conscience, with various degrees of advantage for virtue and piety, with hopeful encouragements to excite them to repent of sin and return to God, and very probable hopes of acceptance, if they sincerely repent of past sins, and practise the duties of love which they owe to God and man, and betake themselves to the free mercy of God, so far as it is revealed, and so far as reason and conscience can guide and enable them in this imperfect state. And can our reason say, that the great God is bound to go farther than this toward the recovery of sinful man?

Proposition X. These are some of the reasonings of the light of nature on this divine subject. It must be granted indeed, that if we had no assistances from revelation, the wisest and most thoughtful of men, by the mere light of nature, would hardly draw out their inferences to this degree of evidence and just hope: For if they could, why had not *Socrates* and *Plato*, those excellent philosophers, said the same things long ago? Are we so much better furnished with genius and the powers of reasoning than they were? Why should we be so vain and conceited of ourselves? It is certainly divine revelation and the advantage which we have from the word of God among us, that enables us to carry our reasonings to such a length.

Yet when we have many noble hints and lifts given us by the bible, to spread these scenes and ideas before us, and to carry us into this train of consequences; we may then make it appear, that these propositions are either certainly or probably connected with each other, and that these consequences may be esteemed the result of fair and free reasoning on this subject.

Proposition XI. This might be illustrated by a plain and obvious similitude, or rather a comparison between the sciences of geometry and religion, as the one is assisted by *Euclid*, and the other by *Moses*, and the other holy writers.

Euclid has drawn out his reasonings upon lines and circles, angles and numbers, into a noble set of propositions in his books of geometry, and filled the world with most useful pieces of knowledge built upon undeniable demonstrations. Every man has the natural powers of reasoning as well as *Euclid*, and by the advantage of some acquaintance with his propositions and reasonings, or the works of some other great geometrician, a multitude of men have made a rich progress in this science, and can draw up a scheme of geometry, in a chain of just consequences: But without these advantages there is not one man in ten thousand would carry on their reasonings half so far as *Euclid* has done, or find out one quarter of his propositions, or the arguments whereby he proves them. The same thing may be justly said concerning our drawing out doctrines and inferences upon the affairs of God and religion, by the light of nature, with the bible in our hands, which not one man in ten thousand would be able to do, or at least would ever do in fact, without this advantage.

Proposition XII. Let us here stand still and recapitulate some of the things we have mentioned. Let us consider the present wretched degenerate state of all mankind, the giddiness and darkness of their understandings, the power of their prejudices,
the

the vicious inclination of their hearts, the influence of evil examples round them, and the universal stream of impiety or idolatry, folly or vice, that has carried away all nations; let us consider how very poor and low, how wretched and ridiculous were the sentiments of men on divine subjects, and the affairs of religion in the days and nations of heathenism; let us reflect how wild are the notions, and how weak the reasonings of men, who are left entirely to the mere light of nature, or who have no revelation but such feeble glimpses and broken hints as they have derived down by long tradition, from the far distant heads of their families, *Shem, Ham, or Japheth*; let us think with ourselves how exceeding few of the heathens, without some communications with the *Jews*, or some traditional hints of ancient revelation, have been ever led to repent of sin, to make supplication to the true God for forgiveness, to practise piety towards God, or virtue towards men, from a sincere design to honour and obey their maker; let us consider the best schemes of religion and morality that were ever given by the heathen philosophers, and observe how grossly defective they are, and how little they themselves or their disciples ever practised them. Again, let us think of the wisest and best of them, whose virtues made such a blaze in the heathen world, how universally they neglected the love of God, as the principle of their virtues, and the glory of God, as their end of them; for though "they knew God by the light of nature, they glorified him not as God," *Rom. i. 21*. And let us farther review the wretched character that the apostle *Paul* gives of the gentile world, in *Rom. i. Ephe. ii. Col. i. &c.* into what abominable iniquities they were plunged, even whole tribes and nations of men; and if we then reflect how well these accounts of *St. Paul* agree with the reports of modern travellers, I fear we shall find but exceeding few who can make any claim or pretence to the future rewarding grace of their creator. And perhaps, upon a view of these matters of fact, the surest thing that reason can determine is this, that when all shall stand before the judgment-seat of God, the better sort of heathens can arise no higher in their utmost claims or pretences, than to be treated with some lighter punishments; and that the more impious and abominable wretches will be distinguished by more severe and durable inflictions of misery; for the very best cannot lay a just and sure claim to any reward. I will not dare to say this is the utmost favour God will shew them, but this seems to be the utmost certain claim or pretence to favour, which, by the light of nature, they can justly make for themselves.

Q U E S T.

Q U E S T I O N XI.

What does scripture reveal to us concerning the punishment due to sin? Or, what are to understand by that death which the scripture tells us was threatened to man, as the penalty due to the first offence, or as it is inflicted on mankind on the account of sin?

IT is evident from the second chapter of *Genesis*, and from many other places in scripture, that death is the penalty threatened for the sin of man; *Gen. ii. 17.* "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now under this term "dying," mentioned in the original law of innocency, many of our christian writers have generally supposed every thing to be included which has been ever since called "death," in the old or new testament; viz. "natural death," or the death of the body; "spiritual death," or the loss of God's favour and image in the soul; and "eternal death," or torment both of soul and body in another world. Let us consider how far the word "death" ought reasonably to be extended to each of these.

I. "Natural death," or the death of the body, is one thing plainly designed in the first threatening, beyond all controversy. The natural life of the sinner is forfeited to him who gave it, when he has once broken his allegiance to his creator and supreme Lord. That this is the first and most obvious idea of the punishment threatened, may be plainly proved, because this is the universal, common, and literal meaning of the word death, in all human languages.

This is also the very sense of the same writer *Moses*, when he uses the same words in all other parts of his writings, viz. "Thou shalt surely die; or, in dying thou shalt die." In those places it means evidently temporal death, as might be proved easily if we consult all those places.

And let it be observed, that in those early ages the future and invisible world being very little brought into view, the word death might naturally include in it the forfeiture of all being and all comforts whatsoever, since it evidently means the loss and forfeiture of all visible being, life and comforts; for all these appear to vanish at death.

And this notion of death will not be strange, if we can agree to the learned and ingenious Mr. *Warburton's* sentiment in his "divine legation of *Moses*," viz. that the "doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is not to be found in the *mosaic* dispensation, nor did it make any part of it;" though I dare not so universally pronounce this opinion true.

Besides, this death of the body was positively foretold to *Adam*, and was the sentence pronounced upon him when he had actually sinned: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." *Gen. iii. 19.* And accordingly we find, that when *Adam* is said to "get a son in his own likeness, that is, in his own mortal likeness," in contradistinction to the glorious and immortal likeness of God, in which the foregoing verses tell us he was first made, *Gen. v. 1 — 3.* Then the scripture goes on to prove it, by shewing how this death was executed: There is a plain account follows

follows of the natural death of *Adam*, and a long succession of the deaths of his posterity, as being made mortal in the image of *Adam*, their natural head.

And as I have shewn before, that not only life, but health and ease, and the comforts of life being the free gifts of God our creator, they are all forfeited by the offence of his creature against him: And all the pains, and sorrows, and sicknesses of this life, which by degrees tend to wear out nature, and to bring man down to the dust, may be justly supposed to be implied in his threatening of death.

And as this natural death of the body is plainly implied in the first threatening as a penalty for sin, to come upon *Adam* and his posterity; so not only all the books of *Moses*, but perhaps all the old testament, do scarce afford us any instances wherein the word "death," properly and without a figure, is taken to signify any thing else plainly but the sorrows and miseries of this life, and the final deprivation of life itself; though, in the first threatening tacitly, it may include the forfeiture of every thing God had before given, so far as God please to resume it. See note, question IX. section VI.

II. The next thing our divines have usually included in the word dying, is "spiritual death." which has been generally extended to signify the anguish of a guilty conscience, the loss of the divine image in holiness, with the loss of the divine favour, and the infliction of new sorrows on the soul. Let us consider each of these apart, and see how far they may be included in the first threatening.

1. The "anguish of conscience" can never belong to any but the personal transgressor himself, because it consists in the uneasy and painful reflexions of the mind of him that has sinned, charging himself with his own act of folly and disobedience. This is the natural effect or consequent of personal sin, and not so properly the threatened penalty of the law. This anguish does not come upon the off-spring of *Adam* by imputation on the account of the first sin; for it can never be imputed to another person by any representation or suretyship: Nor can it ever be conveyed or transmitted by any natural propagation or descent; for, in the nature of things, anguish of conscience can only belong to the very person who is conscious of his own actual folly and rebellion, which another person can never be conscious of*. But though this cannot be communicated to the off-spring of *Adam*, on account of his sin; yet when they become personal sinners, they feel this anguish of conscience also arising from their own actual transgressions, as the natural consequence of a guilty mind.

2. The "loss of the image of God in holiness," is another thing contained in spiritual death, and in the new testament this is termed by *St. Paul*, a "death in trespasses and sins," *Eph. ii. 1.* It consists in the corruption of human nature, and a bias or propensity toward evil. But this cannot be so properly threatened as the penalty of the law to be inflicted for the sin of *Adam*; for the holy and righteous
 God

* By the way we may take notice here, that though infants have the sin of *Adam* so far imputed to them, as to fall under the sentence of death; and though the sins of the world were so far imputed to *Christ*, the second *Adam*, as to expose him to sufferings of soul and body, and to the accursed death, yet neither infants nor our blessed Lord ever had, nor can have, any anguish of conscience, because this arises only from the actual and personal sin striking the mind of the actual and personal transgressor with sharp reflexions and inward remorse, as conscious of his own fault. We may all be grieved and sorry that *Adam* our father sinned, but we cannot have painful inward remorse, reproaches or self-reflexions, on the account of the sin or sins which we ourselves never committed.

God cannot be the author of sin in his creatures; he cannot infuse sin into the nature of man, nor take away his virtues by any divine act, or make him vicious*. This must therefore be only esteemed as a natural effect or consequent of man's first sin, as I have shewn under questions III. and IX.

3. The soul's loss of the favour of God, is another part of spiritual death: The loss of the manifestations of God's love, of friendly converse with him, and any peculiar instances of his grace, may be included in the word spiritual death, 1 *John* iii. 14. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death:" And perhaps this may be also included in that scriptural expression, *Eph.* ii. 1 — 3. because they who "are dead in trespasses and sins are said to be children of wrath," or obnoxious to the divine anger.

The words "indignation and wrath," &c. in *Rom.* ii. 8. where the terms of the covenant of works are recited, seem to intimate that this may possibly be included in the word death, as a threatened part of the punishment, and reaches to the soul as well as the body, and that even after it's separation from the body as well as before.

The favour of God was certainly forfeited in a legal manner, by the sin of the first man; this is a proper punishment for sin: For we cannot suppose that God, the righteous governor of the world, will all always treat a criminal as he does an innocent person; but will both threaten and manifest some tokens of his displeasure against him, in order to maintain his authority and government.

4. And not merely the punishment of loss, or the withdrawing of the sense of divine love, but the punishment of sense, as the schools call it, that is, actual pain, sorrow, signified by the words "tribulation and anguish," may be impressed upon the soul by God himself, or by good or evil angels, as his ministers; and this is a proper legal penalty due to sin, and may be included in this "spiritual death." In this sense the devil may be called the "angel of death, or he who has the power of death," *Heb.* ii. 14. as well as that he has power sometimes to kill the body. Under this head we may partly include the fear or dread of all these evils, or of any of them.

These four things then may be included in "spiritual death;" the two first of them as the natural consequences or effects of sin foretold, and the two last as proper punishments threatened: And the dread of them is partly a natural effect as well as a punishment.

Let us proceed now to the third distinction of death, as it is explained by our chief authors who treat on divine things.

III. "Eternal death" consists in the misery both of soul and body, in the invisible world, and in a future state: Thus it is generally explained by our writers, and has been often said to be included in the penalty due to the first sin. Let us here enquire into it.

First, Let us consider it as it relates to the soul of man. The soul is an immaterial and thinking being, it has in itself no natural principles of dissolution; and therefore, so far as we can judge, it must be immortal in it's own nature: But who can say, whether the word DEATH might not be fairly construed to extend to the utter destruction of the life of the soul as well as the body,

* See question IX. section II.

body, if God the righteous governor should please to seize the forfeiture * ? For man by sin had forfeited all that God had given him, that is, the life and existence of his soul, as well as his body : All is forfeited by sin into the hands of God ; and why might not the threatening declare the right that even a God of goodness had to resume all back again, and utterly destroy and annihilate his creatures for ever †.

There is not one place of scripture that occurs to me, where the word death, as it was first threatened in the law of innocency, necessarily signifies a certain miserable immortality of the soul, either to *Adam* the actual sinner, or to his posterity. I say, I do not remember any such text, but will not positively assert there is none.

But suppose this “ death ” mean the utter destruction of soul as well as of the body, to be a penalty due to every sin, for the “ wages of sin is death,” *Rom.* vi. 23. even the least sin or offence against God ; yet where the sin of man hath any degrees of aggravation, perhaps the divine justice would not destroy the soul, but would continue the soul in it’s natural immortality and consciousness after the death of the body, to sustain farther punishments answerable to these aggravations : God may resume more or less of what man has forfeited by sin. And it is a point determined by our Saviour, that continuance in life and misery is a greater punishment than annihilation ; for he says, “ It is better never to have been born,” than to be punished as *Judas* the traitor shall be punished, *Matth.* xxvi. 24.

And since there is scarce any actual sin but what has some aggravations ; either greater or less, perhaps there is no actual sinner, but has deserved some continuance of his soul in it’s existence, consciousness and misery. And on this account the death threatened by the covenant of works, especially to the actual and personal transgressor, may perhaps, include in it that “ indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which is due to every immortal soul that actually doth amiss, *πάσαι ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου κατεργαζομένη τὸ κακόν*, every soul that worketh evil,” *Rom.* ii. 8, 9. For as I shewed before, the apostle seems to speak there of justification and condemnation, by a law or covenant of works.

But whether the great God would have actually continued the soul of *Adam* the first sinner, in a state of existence after death, and in a long immortality, to punish his actual offence, if he had not given him a new covenant, that is, a covenant of grace and salvation, this is not plainly revealed nor determined in scripture. It is certain that “ the wages, or due recompence of sin is death,” whether it mean an utter destruction of soul and body, or else bodily death with a state of misery for the soul after the body is dead. The whole of our life and being and comfort in soul and body, is forfeited by sin, and God may resume more or less, as his wisdom shall direct, in order to punish the guilty according to the greater or less aggravations or demerits of their crimes §.

VOL. VI.

N n

Secondly,

* See note, page 261.

† It is granted that God, considered merely as a sovereign and as just, might resume all from his creature, though he be without sin ; but we can hardly think a God of goodness would do it, till sin had made a forfeiture.

§ It is granted, that the first man standing under such a law and covenant as is before explained, hath by sin forfeited all that he had, both life and being with all the blessings of it, for himself and his posterity into the hands of his maker, so far as the rectoral wisdom or justice of God please to resume them ; yet

Secondly, The other part of "eternal death," or eternal misery, consists in the raising the body up again from the dead, and rejoining it to the soul, in order to be made eternally miserable together with the soul, or rather to be an everlasting instrument of the soul's misery and torment. But that this resurrection of the body to a state of misery, is threatened in the bible for the punishment of *Adam's* first sin, is what I cannot prove, nor do I know in what text of scripture to find it. The law of innocency threatens death; but as the promise of life made to innocency was "immortality and eternal life" without need of a resurrection, *Rom. ii. 7.* so the threatening of death to sin did not, that I can find, imply a resurrection. It was not said in *Gen. ii. 17.* "Thou shalt surely die, and shalt rise again to new sorrows."

There are several places of scripture wherein the resurrection is rather attributed to *Christ*, and to his undertaking in a covenant of grace, besides that remarkable one, *1 Cor. xv. 21.* "As by man came death, so by man came the resurrection of the dead:" But I know not of any one line in the word of God that provides a miserable resurrection as the punishment threatened to the offence of *Adam*. It is very probable therefore, that the resurrection of the body was introduced by *Christ*, the second *Adam* upon another foot, namely, upon the gospel-proposal of mercy to all mankind in the promise made to *Adam* after his fall, which has been usually called the first gospel, or an epitome of the gospel of *Christ*: And whosoever should refuse this grace, or abuse it by actual impenitence and indulgence of sin, should suffer punishment in soul and body for ever. This "is called the second death." *Rev. xxi. 8.*

So that as the gospel or covenant of grace has provided hope and salvation by *Jesus*, the mediator, for all that would accept of it whether under the patriarchal, *jewish*, or christian dispensation; so those who continue impenitent, and will not return to God according to this new covenant, are exposed to double punishment under the government of the mediator; and he will raise them from the dead to receive the reward of their obstinacy and impenitence, their violation of the law of God, and their neglect of all the means and hopes of grace.

yet it is justly doubted whether the great God would inflict any penalties beyond death, or any punishment in a future world, on those who have no personal sin, but lie only under the sentence of *Adam's* imputed sin. This will be debated in the sixteenth question.

Q U E S .

Q U E S T I O N XII.

What doth the holy scripture reveal concerning the recovery of mankind from the sin and misery of that estate into which they were brought by the disobedience of Adam? And how far does this recovery reach, both with regard to the persons recovered, and with regard to the degrees of their recovery?

PERHAPS this great and important enquiry may be answered by the following propositions and reasonings.

Proposition I. *Adam* the first man having sinned against God, and brought such a dishonour on the law and authority of his maker, and tainted his seed with sin, he has thereby exposed himself and his posterity, that is, the whole race of mankind, to death: But God, who is rich in mercy, gave him a promise of a redeemer or Saviour, *Gen. iii. 15.* who should be the “seed of the woman, and should break the head of the serpent;” that is, destroy the works of the devil, and deliver men from that mischief and misery into which sin had plunged them, through the temptation of the devil, who lay hid in the serpent.

Proposition II. God’s own and only begotten son *Jesus Christ*, who before the world was with God, who was one with the Father, and was God, was himself appointed by the Father to become the Saviour of mankind, that all those might be recovered by pardoning grace to the favour of God, and raised at last to eternal life, who should repent of sin, and trust in the mercy of God, according to the several degrees of the discovery of it, which should be made in different nations and ages of the world, from the days of *Adam* to the days of christianity.

Proposition III. For this end God appointed this his Son, at a certain period of time to take “flesh and blood upon him, and to become a man, and to be born of a woman, that he might become the seed of the woman,” according to his early promise made to fallen man, *Gen. iii. 15.*

Proposition IV. God ordained and sent his Son to preach this gospel of repentance, faith and pardon, more clearly than ever before, and appointed him to obey his law perfectly, and to suffer the sorrows of life and death itself, instead of sinful man who broke his law, that by his perfect obedience and by his sharp sufferings, he might shew how greatly God hated sin, and might vindicate that honour of the law and majesty of God, which the sin of man had violated, and procure for men a discharge from those evils which he sustained, and obtain full salvation for sinful men. The great God, the Lord of heaven and earth, did not think it becoming his dignity and his majesty, to pass by such grievous offences, without some glorious and terrible demonstration of his own holiness, and his abhorrence of sin, even while he designed to save the sinners: His justice, that is, his rectoral wisdom, did not see it proper to exercise his mercy toward criminals, without some vindication of the wisdom and holiness of his broken law, some reparation of his honour, and some recompence to the authority of his government, which had been injured by our sins: Nor would he receive the offending creature into his favour without such a mediator, as could not only plead for the offender, but could make

atonement for his offence. It would be too tedious to enter into the proof of this atonement here. Many and sufficient defences of it are written, and the epistles of *St. Paul*, *Peter*, and *John*, are so express in this doctrine, that one would think it needs no farther proof. This is set in a convincing light in two treatises, viz. † “Of *Jesus* the mediator;” and, “The redeemer and sanctifier*.”

Proposition V. Nor is it at all improper, or unbecoming the dignity or justice of God, or the state of man, that God should set up one man, even his own Son, to be the second *Adam*, or a head of life and salvation for multitudes, since it is evident that one man, or the first *Adam*, was the head or spring of sin, misery and death to multitudes. Both under the covenant of works and under the covenant of grace, the blessed God is pleased to transact his affairs with men in and by a single person, who was appointed a head and representative of many thousands. And doubtless there were most important reasons for this conduct of God.

Proposition VI. But since this appointment of salvation by *Jesus Christ*, was the mere effect of God's free mercy and sovereign good-will, therefore he was at liberty to appoint the exercise of his own grace, and the gift of this salvation to fallen man, in such ways and manners, under such limitations, with such terms or conditions, and in such degrees, as he pleased.

Now, to set this matter in the clearest light I can, I would shew what were the measures or limitations of this grace or salvation provided for fallen man.

1. This grace or salvation did not extend so far as to abolish or destroy the general terms, commands or sanctions of the law of innocence, or the law of works, as it is called, under which *Adam* the first man was constituted †. This general law is a law of nature and creation: It is founded in the very nature of things, and the relation between God and a creature, which requires all the creatures of God to yield perfect obedience to the whole will of their maker, whether manifested by reason or revelation: And the penalty of this law abides still in force, in that it threatens the curse, or “death to every one that continues not in all things contained in this law,” *Gal. iii. 10.* and “the judgment of God, or the *δικασμος*,” the righteous sentence of the law, is, “That they who commit such things are worthy of death,” *Rom. i. 32.* “The wages, or reward, of sin is death.” *Rom. vi. 23.*

This death in general implies a forfeiture of life and being, and all the blessings of it, both in soul and body, as far as God is pleased to resume them, as I have shewn under questions IX. and XI.

2. As the law with it's penalty, which threatens death to disobedience, is not abrogated, so the promise of eternal life to perfect obedience, which was superadded to the law, and turned it into a covenant, was not formerly abrogated or abolished; though indeed it became unable to procure eternal life for any son or daughter of *Adam*, because they all were sinners: And there are some scriptures which seem to shew that this promise and covenant stand still in force, *Gal. iii. 12.* “The man that doth them shall live in them,” *Rom. ii. 7.* “To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, the law promises eternal life.” *Rom. viii. 3.* “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through

* See volume III. page 735.

† I say, the covenant of grace does not abolish the law of works, in the general terms of it, viz. “He that sins shall die;” though indeed the particular prohibition of “eating of the tree of knowledge” grows useless entirely upon *Adam's* expulsion from the garden, and his everlasting absence from all the fruit there, which was no more in his power to eat.

through the flesh," &c. Observe, it was not weak in itself to give life; the law still remained capable of giving life to any man who could produce and shew a perfect obedience to it: But "it is weak only through the flesh," or the sinfulness of human nature and our impotence to fulfil the conditions of it.

3. Neither did this grace and salvation of *Christ* extend so far as to provide an immediate and present release of fallen mankind, nor of any part of them, from all that sin and misery which the disobedience of *Adam* had introduced into the world. The very representation of those scenes of iniquity and mischief, sorrow and death, which attend all mankind, and which have been before exhibited, is a sufficient proof of the continuance and power of original sin all over the world, and the dreadful effects and punishments of it; and shews that mankind in general is not released from it, nor is any part of them immediately and totally delivered.

If therefore some of our divines, when they been expounding the fifth chapter to the *Romans*, have been heard to say, that the obedience, the atonement and death of *Christ* have put an end to the effects of the sin of *Adam*, and brought in as extensive a blessing as *Adam* did a curse, they must not be supposed to mean that original sin, with all the sinful, painful and mortal effects of it in men, women and children, is as entirely done away as though they had never been, or as though *Adam* had not sinned: For this is contrary to the witness of our senses, and the observation of our minds, every day of our lives.

4. Nor did this grace of God provide an absolute, certain and effectual salvation for all mankind from the penalties and effects of the broken law of innocence, for it is evident enough that all men will not be saved. But lest this method of grace should be utterly ineffectual to all men, the blessed God, who saw the universal degeneracy and corrupt principles of mankind, would not leave it to such an uncertainty, whether any men should be finally saved or no. It was not fit so glorious a provision for our salvation should be left in so doubtful a manner. And it is highly reasonable to think, that God foresaw, no man would repent and accept of this grace, if they were all entirely left to their own choice and their own follies.

Therefore he resolved a number should effectually accept of it.

Now had it been possible that such a number could be secured in an indefinite manner, without appointing and naming every particular person, perhaps God might have left it in such an indefinite manner. But since that could not be done, therefore he saw it necessary to provide an effectual security for some certain and determined persons, which in scripture are called the "sheep of *Christ*, whom he must bring into his fold, and they shall hear his voice; the children given him, his church, the elect of God, chosen before the foundation of the world; those who were given to *Christ* by the Father, those whose names were written in the lamb's book of life; those which were predestinated or ordained to eternal life, who were redeemed from the earth, chosen to be holy," &c. *John*. x. 11, 14, 16. *Rom.* viii. 33. *Eph.* i. 4. *John* x. 29. *Rom.* viii. 30. *Heb.* ii. 14. *Acts* xiii. 48. and many other places, as *Rev.* xiv. 3, 4. and chapter v. 9.

And I cannot but make this observation in my reading of the new testament, that though there are some scriptures which seem favourable to both sides of the question about the "election of persons," yet the texts which support this doctrine are more in number, and more plain, and express, and unanswerable, than those others
which

which may seem to oppose this particular election of persons unto faith, holiness and salvation*.

5. And even these very persons for whom salvation was thus certainly and effectually provided, were not to be rescued in this world from all the miseries of the fall, but only from some of them: They were secured first from those evils which were most dreadful, and delivered from others by degrees.

The effects of the fall or sin of man, under which these favourites or elect of God continue, are such as these, viz. God suffers them to come into the world with a sinful nature, uncured, un sanctified, and to continue under some evil operations and influences of this sinful nature all their lives, that they might conflict with it, and overcome it by his assistances: He appoints them also to continue during all this mortal life, subject to many pains, afflictions, sorrows, miseries, for wise ends and purposes, in his oeconomy of grace; and at last, that their bodies should die, and turn to dust, according to the original threatening of death.

The deliverance or salvation which God provided for them, was, that they should be restored to the favour and image of God again, and brought at last to eternal life and happiness in this manner, viz. that they should have a most lively sense or perception of their own guilt and misery, and of the hope of mercy, so far as to encourage their repentance for past sins, and their return to God by new obedience: And so far as the gospel of *Christ* came within their notice, they should learn the saving methods of grace by *Christ Jesus*: And to this end, all these things should be set before their minds by divine impressions on their understanding, as well as by the word; this is called enlightening their minds in the knowledge of their sin and misery; and of the way of salvation by *Christ*. And yet further, that they should have their sinful natures in some measure sanctified or made holy here on earth, by a great change wrought upon them by God's holy Spirit, which is called regeneration, or being born again; that they should be enabled by the Spirit of God to comply with all the proposals or necessary terms of this covenant of grace or salvation, which should be appointed them by God himself as governor of the world, or by *Jesus Christ* his Son, as his great vicegerent, and Lord of all: That their sins should be pardoned, both original and actual, so far as never to be shut out of the favour of God, and the promise of eternal life on the account of them; yet that they should sustain such sorrows and sufferings in their way to eternal happiness, as might teach them the evil nature and the bitter fruits of sin, and by degrees wean them from it: That they should have many assistances, reliefs and comforts, under the difficulties and trials, sorrows and miseries, which they should sustain in this life: That their souls should be received into a holy and peaceful state, in the presence of *Christ* in heaven, at the death of their bodies: And that their
bodies

* I desire the friendly reader to observe, that I am not here discussing the controversy about the proof of "particular election," &c. That has been done to much better purpose, and the doctrine itself effectually proved by many considerable writers, such as Mr. *Calvin*, archbishop *Usher*, doctor *Owen*, doctor *Goodwin*, and others, among whom I name Mr. *Baxter* himself. But I am only endeavouring to try, whether I cannot represent a plain and defensible scheme, wherein this doctrine will sit easy on the minds of men, without straining or torturing any text of scripture, and without pronouncing damnation on all the rest of mankind, by a certain and unavoidable sentence of death, for want of a Saviour.

If it be enquired, why the all-wise and blessed God should suffer mankind to revolt from him at first by an universal apostasy, and why he should secure the recovery of so few out of all mankind from their state of sin and misery; there are some reasonable solutions given to this difficulty, by the writer of the "strength and weakness of human reason," in the fourth conference. See volume II. pages 395—316.

bodies should be raised again at the last day, and be rejoined to their souls, at which time they should be publicly acquitted, and acknowledged as the sons of God, and be freed from all the unhappy effects and penalties of the fall of *Adam*, and be thenceforth made for ever happy in the presence of God. It would be too tedious to cite all the scriptures which prove this; for they are scattered up and down every where in the new testament.

6. It seems also to be agreeable to the laws of nature and creation, that young children or infants, who are utterly incapable of knowing either the laws of God, or the discoveries and proposals of his mercy, and of complying with either of them in their own persons, should be esteemed as a part of their parents, or as one with their parents, as to all the purposes of this dispensation of grace, and the blessings which flow from it; and therefore God is called, "The God of *Abraham*, and the God of his seed," in their successive generations, *Gen. xvii. 7, 8.* Therefore the gentiles, when converted to God, are said to be "the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their off-spring with them," *Isa. lxxv. 23.* I do not stand now to give any longer proof of this matter, which has been so much controverted; but only add, it is not at all strange that God should make his covenant of grace so favourable and extensive to those children of pious persons, who never live to be capable of knowing or transacting these sacred affairs for themselves, since he has evidently so constituted it, in a great measure, in the kingdom of nature, and in the kingdom of providence; for in these it is evident, that children often inherit the gout or the stone, a healthy and robust constitution, or sickness and pain, poverty or riches, disgrace or honour, according to the condition and circumstances of their parents. And since it was so constituted in the law of innocency, or the covenant of works, whereby all the children of *men* should have been established in happiness, if *Adam* their father had continued in his obedience, and whereby all the posterity of *Adam* are now born in sin and misery, and involved in his fall, when he became a rebel against his maker; why may we not reasonably suppose, the mercy of God would extend as far as his justice? And why may not the happiness of the new covenant of grace be conveyed to the infant-off-spring of those who have accepted it, which die in their infancy, and can have no state of trial in their own persons?

7. Since the Son of God, *Jesus Christ*, was so very glorious a person in his own nature, one who "was with God, and was God, one who had all the fulness of the godhead dwelling in him bodily," there was such an abounding merit in his perfect obedience to the law of God for four and thirty years together, his voluntary submission to so many sorrows and sufferings in his life, and afterwards his enduring death itself, which was the express penalty threatened for sin? I say, there was such a superabundant value and merit in these undertakings, arising from the dignity of his person and character, that these labours, and these sufferings, did not only procure absolute and certain salvation for the elect, according to the will and appointment of the Father, but they may justly be called sufficient in their own nature, to have obtained actual salvation for all mankind.

And though God did not think fit to appoint all mankind to be certainly and effectually saved thereby, yet this redundancy of the merit of *Christ*, this overflowing influence of his great undertaking, his obedience and his death, might be actually appointed and accepted by God the Father, to obtain the following benefits for men; and as far as common benefits reach, *Christ* may be said "to die for

280 *What does scripture reveal of the recovery of man?* Quest. XII.
for all, or to taste death for every man," in the language of scripture *:
2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Heb. ii. 9.

I. We may suppose it is owing to the exuberant merits of *Christ*, that this earth continues to be the habitation for mankind, and that the life of *Adam* and *Eve* were preserved some hundreds of years after the day in which they first sinned, since the express word of threatening consigned them over to death immediately, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die." *Gen.* ii. 17.

It is true, such a reprieve as this was necessary in order to the peopling of the world, and the propagation of mankind in their successive generations; for had *Adam* and *Eve* died in the day when they sinned, the human nature would have been at an end, and have perished from this earth for ever: But it is most probably owing to the scheme of mercy, and the new covenant built upon the merit of *Christ*, that *Adam* and *Eve* were not destroyed that very day, and that God permitted a race of men to cover the face of the earth. So that every son and daughter of *Adam*, who is born into this world, is some proof that the extensive merit of the death of *Christ* reaches to them for some purposes.

II. It is owing to the superabundant merit of the obedience and sufferings of *Christ*, that the earth is appointed still and ordered to produce such a variety of supports and comforts for mankind in their successive generations, and that all the vegetable and animal powers on this earth, are not universally blasted by the curse: All the blessings of nature and providence that spring up from the earth, that descend from the heavens, that are brought forth or dispersed by the sun and the moon and the clouds, that are enjoyed and tasted by the sons and daughters of men in this world, are probably derived from this fountain of the blood of *Christ*; and in this sense perhaps, he may be said to taste death for every man.

And let it be observed, that these blessings reach to whole nations where we have but little reason to believe God has any chosen favourites, any of his own beloved children, any that are actually regenerated, adopted and sanctified to himself by special grace. Yet methinks every thing round about us seems to speak, that God has not utterly and absolutely abandoned all mankind to certain and necessary guilt and misery, besides the few whom he has chosen and secured to be certain subjects of his Son's kingdom: Every divine monument and instance of bounty and blessing round about us, seems to teach us that God is upon terms of grace and reconciliation with all the rebel race of his creature man.

III. That mankind have the common faculties of nature continued to them, is to be ascribed to the undertaking of *Christ*: That they have the use of their senses and their

* Though there must be a very good sense in which *Christ* may be said to "die for all men," because scripture uses this language, 2 Cor. v. 15. yet it does not follow that the doctrine of universal redemption is found there; I cannot find that scripture once asserts, that "*Christ* redeemed all men, or died to redeem them all." In the new testament, however the word ἀγοράζω, "to buy," may possibly be used and applied in a large sense, yet ἐξαγοράζω, "to redeem, or λύσω," I think, is never applied particularly to any but the *Israel* of God, or to those who do or shall actually receive the gospel, and partake of the salvation of *Christ*, as the purchase of his blood. None but those are plainly and expressly said to be redeemed by *Christ*, in any text of the new testament that I can find. ἤγορασε, "he bought, or paid a sufficient price for, those who fell into damnable errors and heresies," 2 Pet. ii. 1. But it is never said, he redeemed them. He bought them as a part of those "all things" whose dominion he obtained by his sufferings, *Phil.* ii. 9, 10. but not as his own people.

their limbs in any measures of health, ease, vigour, and activity; for these were all forfeited by sin, and included in the word death. All this is owing probably to *Christ*. And that they have any exercise of reason, that they have any measures of wisdom or prudence amongst them in the conduct of their affairs, may be ascribed also to the same spring, and perhaps this was designed in that text, *John* i. 4, 9. wherein we are told that "the word was the light, and life of men, and he was that light that lighteth every man who cometh into this world."

IV. That there are any sparks of natural virtue, any remains of benevolence, goodness or compassion towards one another in the hearts of men, is probably the fruit of the mediation of *Christ*: That there are any social virtues among them, that there is any conscience of probity, equity and justice, that mankind relieves and helps one another, that there is any such thing as government among men, and that all the sons and daughters of *Adam*, in all nations, are not mere savages, are not like wolves and bears to each other; and in short, that this earth is not a mere wilderness, or a hell of mischief and misery, is owing to restraining grace, and the redundant merit of the sufferings and death of *Christ*; or at least it may probably be so, nor can we give a better account of it.

V. That all mankind have had a gospel revealed to them, or a covenant of grace proposed to their acceptance, at first, in and by *Adam* their father, and conveyed by way of tradition to his posterity; surely this must be acknowledged to proceed from the generous undertaking of *Christ*. I speak here concerning those who are not elected, as well as those who are; for it has been designedly manifested to those who refuse, as well as those who accept. It seems to me to be owing to the overflowing merit of *Christ*, that all mankind are not buried in the same gross and brutal ignorance of God, and of themselves, as the darkest and vilest corners of the world are.

It is owing probably to this spring, that all mankind ever had pardon, grace and salvation proposed to them in the first promise made to *Adam*, in the covenant made to *Noah*, and in the gospel or hope of salvation, which he, who was a preacher of righteousness, doubtless communicated to his posterity, that is, to all the world.

It is owing to the same grace and purchase of *Christ*, that ever this promise should be again repeated to *Abraham*, and in some sense to all the nations of the earth by him; for in him "all the nations of the earth are blessed." *Gen.* xxii. 18. It is an effect of the merit of *Christ*, that ever there should be so many further discoveries of grace to the *Jewish* nation, even to the profane as well as to the pious among them, and that not only by *Moses* and the prophets, but by *Christ* himself; and that ever this gospel should be published to the nations of the world, in the brightest edition of it, by the apostles of *Christ*, and the glad tidings of salvation proclaimed to the heathens, who "sat in thick darkness, and lay under the shadow of death," and even to those among them who never accepted it.

It is owing to this redundancy of merit in his death, than so many whole nations are called to repent, and to trust in the mercy of a God through a Saviour; even the non-elected, as well as those that are elected: And that to this day, the gospel should be continued to the nations who have so many years and ages abused it; that the ministry of the word should call whole kingdoms to be reconciled to God by a mediator, to trust in the merit of *Christ*, to receive *Jesus*, as their

Saviour and their Lord, to accept of pardon of sin and eternal happiness, upon the terms which the gospel reveals.

VI. It is probably owing to the same undertaking of *Christ*, and the overflowing value of his righteousness and death, that there are so many means of grace and divine assistances, both outward and inward, afforded to whole nations where the gospel comes; that even those who are not elected, have so many awakening providences, so many peculiar opportunities of mercy, so many excellent sermons preached to them, so many suitable words spoken both from the law and the gospel, as it were to their own souls. It is surely from this mediation of *Christ*, that they have their consciences at any time impressed with divine things, and excited to reprove them for sin, and to seek after salvation; that they have so many common workings of the holy Spirit, and his blessed influences upon their hearts, to make them bethink themselves about their eternal concerns, to give them some knowledge of *Christ* the Saviour, and to stir them up to the duties of faith and repentance, and new obedience; and that they are not only exhorted outwardly by the word, but inwardly by some common and general operations of the holy Spirit, to receive this salvation. Could all these blessings be really bestowed upon sinful men by the faithful and merciful God, if the original, and eternal, and only design of them were merely to render them so much the more heinously criminal, and the more extremely miserable, without any possibility of hope or recovery ever included in these blessings, or intimated by them?

VII. In the last place, it is owing to the most redundant merit of *Christ* our Lord, that such a conditional pardon and salvation, or such conditional propositions of peace as the gospel expresses, were ever provided for them who were not elected; these are set forth in such general proposals and offers as we read in the bible: "Whosoever believeth shall be saved: Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely: Ho, every one that thirsteth, &c. Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth, &c." If there were no such blessing provided for them, so much as in a conditional manner, surely it could never be really and actually, and expressly offered to them. Surely the righteous, the gracious, and the holy God does not tantalize his perishing and miserable creatures, nor send his gospel and his ministers to offer them a mere nullity instead of a benefit? *Christ* does not call them in his gospel to receive an empty nothing, when his words propose to them a solid blessing. He does not invite them to trust in a Saviour for something which this Saviour was never entrusted with to be bestowed upon them, even if they did repent; or to hope in him for a verbal salvation which has nothing real in it; that is, for a mere word or name without a meaning, or a promise without a blessing in it. But because this is a question of great importance, I shall treat it more distinctly.

Q U E S -

Q U E S T I O N XIII.

How far has the glorious undertaking of our Lord Jesus Christ provided any hope of salvation for those who were not eternally chosen, and given into the hands of Christ, to be redeemed and saved?

THE enquiry here is not, whether any of them who are not originally chosen of God, shall be finally saved. The event, though it be known to God, yet it is left to be determined by their own choice or refusal of this salvation. God himself has put no effectual and unsurmountable bar, or rather no bar at all, in their way, to prevent their acceptance of his grace. His chusing other persons who were fellow-sinners, to make them certain partakers of this grace, is no hinderance to those who were not chosen, from accepting the same. It is my opinion that there is such a thing as a general sufficiency of pardon, grace and happiness, provided for all mankind by *Jesus Christ*: And it is left to their own natural powers, under common helps, to accept or refuse it. That there is such a conditional salvation, and such real offers of eternal life procured by the overflowing merit of *Christ*, I think may be proved by these following considerations.

Consideration I. It is very hard to vindicate the sincerity of the blessed God, or his Son, in their universal offers of grace and salvation to men, and their sending ministers with such messages and invitations to accept of mercy, if there be not such a conditional pardon and salvation provided for them.

It is granted, that the ministers who are sent to preach this gospel, and offer this grace of salvation to the non-elect, may be very sincere in their ministry, for they know not whom God has chosen, and for whom he has provided this special grace; and therefore they offer it to all persons, according to their general commission, *Mark xvi. 15.* "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c. But how can God, or *Christ*, be sincere in sending their ministers with this commission, to offer this grace to all men, if they know that God has never provided such grace or salvation for any but the elect, no, not so much as conditionally?

It is hard to suppose that the great God, who is truth itself, and sincere and faithful in all his dealings, should call upon dying men to trust in a Saviour for eternal life, when this Saviour has not eternal life entrusted with him to give them, if they do repent: It is hard to conceive how the great governor of the world can be sincere in inviting and requiring sinners who are on the brink of hell, to cast themselves upon an empty word of invitation, a mere shadow and appearance of support, if there be nothing real to bear them up from those deeps of destruction, nothing but mere words and empty invitations. Can we think that the righteous and holy God would encourage his ministers to call them to lean and rest the weight of their immortal concerns and happiness upon a gospel, a covenant of grace, a mediator, and his merit and righteousness, &c. all which are a mere nothing with regard to them, a heap of empty names, an unsupporting void which cannot uphold them? When our blessed redeemer charges the *jews* with aggravated guilt for refusing his grace, can we suppose he had no such grace in his hand to offer them?

Or when he, as it were, consigns them over to death, because, says he, "ye will not come unto me that ye may have life," *John* v. 40. can we suppose he has no eternal life, not so much as a conditional grant of it in his hands for them?

By the way, I cannot but take notice here, that in order to avoid these hard and absurd consequences of the "calls of grace and offers of salvation where none is really provided," some persons chuse rather roundly to assert, there are no "calls of grace, no offers of pardon or salvation at all in the word of God, to any but to the elect:" And I think of the two it is the more defensible or consistent doctrine, though it seems to run counter to a great many plain scriptures in the old testament and the new; for there are many texts wherein pardon and salvation are proposed to all sinners whatsoever, without any regard whether they are chosen of God or no: And it is the design and voice of the whole current of scripture, to call sinners to repentance by promises of mercy, and to enforce that which *Isaiab* speaks, chapter lv. 6, 7. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: Call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And what our Lord himself pronounces in his personal ministry has the same design, when he calls to all the sinners in *Galilee*, "repent and believe the gospel, for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." *Mark* ii. 17. And *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, his two chief messengers or apostles, call all the crucifiers of *Christ* in general, and the heathen nations, to "repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out; and to believe in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, that they may be saved;" *Acts* iii. 19. and xiii. 38. and xvii. 30. "He commands all men every where to repent." *Rom.* x. 11, 13. while our Saviour most expressly informs us, *Matt.* xxii. 14. that "many are called, but few are chosen." Yet, I think, we must cancel all these scriptures, and deny all offers of grace and salvation made to sinners in general if *Christ* procured and provided nothing for them; or we must grant that there is a conditional salvation provided for all mankind, in order to justify the sincerity of God and his Son in the public call and general invitation given to sinners to repent and accept of this salvation.

Consideration II. It is very hard to defend the sincerity of the Spirit of God, in awakening the consciences of these persons sometimes, who are not elected, and stirring them up to think of receiving the salvation of *Christ* upon the terms of the gospel, if there be no such salvation conditionally provided for them to receive: It is hard to suppose that God should send his own Spirit to excite the consciences of such sinners in any common degrees to any repentings for sin, even in the most legal sense, and to bring them near to the kingdom of heaven, in the beginnings of conviction and sorrow, if there was no pardon provided in any sense for those who are not chosen, whether they repent or no; or that the Spirit should give them any, even the weakest excitations, to trust in the merit of a Saviour, if that merit has obtained no blessing for them, not so much as conditional.

Shall it be ever said, that God the Father, and his Son and Spirit have each done their parts to encourage and excite non-elected sinners to trust in the gospel for salvation, or the least grace or salvation in a conditional sense provided for them to trust in or to accept of?

Consideration III. It is equally difficult to vindicate the equity of God, as the judge of all men, in condemning unbelievers, and punishing them eternally for not accepting

Accepting the offers of pardon, if there was not so much as a conditional pardon provided for them; and for not resting upon the merit of *Christ*, and receiving his salvation, when there was no such merit appointed for them to rest upon, nor any such salvation for them to receive. Surely it will appear in the day of judgment, that the final condemnation of sinners, and their eternal misery, was merely the fruit of their own negligence and disobedience to the voice of the gospel, and refusing the offered grace, and not to any real want of sufficient provision made for them by him who calls them to receive it. The language of *Christ*; in his ministry to sinners, is, "Come to this feast of the gospel, for all things are ready," *Matth.* xxii. 4. "This is the condemnation, that when light came into the world, they loved darkness rather than light," *John* iii. 18, 19. Men are expressly condemned "because they would not believe in *Christ*, nor come unto him that they might have life:" chapter v. 40. and therefore "they die in their sins," as the apostle *John* often represents, chapter viii. 21, 24. Surely the Lord *Jesus* would never be sent "in flaming fire to render vengeance on them that obey not the gospel," *2 Thess.* i. 8, 9. in the commands of it, nor receive this salvation, if there was no sufficient salvation provided in that gospel which commands them to receive it.

It will render this consideration much more forcible, when we observe, that there is a much severer condemnation and more dreadful punishment threatened to those who have heard of this grace and never laid hold of it, in proportion to the degree of light in which this grace was set before them. It is said, "It shall be less tolerable for the cities which refused to receive the gospel that *Christ* preached, than for *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* in the day of judgment;" *Matth.* xi. 22, 24. and they that despise the gospel of *Christ*, "of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall they be thought worthy, than those who despised the law of *Moses*?" *Heb.* x. 28, 29 So that their enjoying the proposals of this grace and this gospel, makes their case much worse than if they had never enjoyed it; and can we think that the righteous judge of the world will merely send words of grace and salvation amongst them, on purpose to make his creatures so much the more miserable, when there is no real grace or salvation contained in those words, for them who refuse to receive it? It is very hard indeed to vindicate the righteousness of the sentence of their double condemnation and punishment, for the refusal of pardon and salvation, if there was not so much as a conditional pardon, and a conditional salvation provided for them.

Consideration IV. It is very hard to suppose, that when the word of God, by the general commands, promises, threatenings, given to all men whatsoever, and often repeated therein, represents mankind as in a state of probation*, and in the way towards eternal rewards or eternal punishments, according to their behaviour in this life: I say, it is hard to suppose all this should be no real and just representation, but a mere amusement: That all these proposals of mercy, and displays of the gracious dealings of God, should be an empty shew with regard to all the millions of mankind, besides the few that are chosen to happiness; and that they should really

* I know it has been the opinion of some persons, that this life is not properly called a state of probation or trial of men for eternity, because the final event is not uncertain, since it is known to God already, and partly determined by him: And yet these very persons will say, that a season of affliction or temptation is a season of trial to the people of God; for so it is often called in scripture, *2 Cor.* viii. 2. *Heb.* xi. 36. and *1 Pet.* iv. 12. and *1 Pet.* i. 7. it is called, "The trial of our faith," &c. Now I would fain know, whether the event of every season of trial of every kind of men, whether of saints or sinners, be not known to God, and in this sense it is not uncertain; and yet scripture, with much propriety, calls the one a season of trial; and I see no reason to exclude the other from the same name, especially since the sacred writers use it for wicked men also. *Rev.* iii. 10. "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation, or trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the earth."

be so fixed in a wretched, hopeless, and deplorable state under the first sin of the first man, that they are utterly irrecoverable from the ruins of it; and that even as unalterably so as devils are, without any hope of recovery from their state of guilt and misery, for whom there was no Saviour provided, and whom God has not treated in this way of precept, promise and threatening. Is there not a plain difference made in scripture, between the "angels who sinned, whom God spared not, but cast them down from heaven into chains of darkness, and mankind who sinned," to whom God gives time and space for repentance, means of grace, offers of pardon, conditional promises of salvation, with a command to all men to accept it? What can manifest the blessed God to be upon terms of mercy with them, if this does not?

Consideration V. This seems to be a fair and easy way to answer several of those texts of scripture, which represent God as the "Saviour of all men, especially of them who believe," 1 Tim. iv. 10. and assert, that "God calls and commands all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. That "*Christ* tasted death for every man," Heb. ii. 9. That "he gave himself a ransom for all men, to be testified in due time," 1 Tim. ii. 6. That "he died for all," 2 Cor. v. 15. That "he gave himself to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2. and "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," chapter iv. 14. and that "God so loved the world of mankind, that he sent his Son, not to condemn the world, but that through him the world might be saved; and that whosoever believes in his Son *Jesus*, should not perish, but should have eternal life." John iii. 16, 17.

I grant indeed, that many of these scriptures may have a pretty sufficient answer given to them by the art of criticism, even upon the supposition that salvation is provided only for the elect; but there are some few of those scriptures, and of their parallel places, which can never be so well explained, but by supposing the death of *Christ* has such an all-sufficient and overflowing merit in it, as to provide a sufficient conditional pardon, and conditional salvation for the non-elect, while it also provides absolute, effectual and certain pardon and salvation for those whom God has elected.

It seems evident to me from several texts of the word of God, that *Christ* did not die with an equal design for all men; but that there is a special number whom the Father chose and gave to the Son, whose salvation is absolutely secured by the death and intercession of *Christ*, John xvii. 6, 9, 10. but why should this hinder our interpretation of some other texts in a more general and catholic sense, where the love of God and *Christ* to mankind, are expressed in more universal phrases and terms? Why should we affect to limit that grace which is expressed in an unlimited form of speech? Why may we not suppose conditional pardon and conditional salvation, and the offers of the gospel, and the means of grace which are necessary to it, to be the purchase of the death of *Christ*, since the death of so glorious a person has such an exuberant value in it, and such all-sufficient merit; and especially since it is allowed to superabound so far as to purchase the continuance of the world, and common blessings of life for mankind?

Here let it be observed, that when the remonstrants assert that *Christ* died for all mankind, merely to purchase conditional salvation for them, and when those * who profess

* I say, "those who profess to be the strictest calvinists;" not that they do really come nearest to *Calvin's* sentiments and language; for *Calvin* himself has frequently intimated in his comments on scripture, that *Christ* did in some sense die for all men. See the end of this fifth consideration, pages 287, 288.

profess to be the strictest calvinists assert *Christ* died only and merely to procure absolute and effectual pardon and salvation for the elect, it is not because the whole scripture every where expressly or plainly reveals or asserts the particular sentiments of either of these sects, with an exclusion of the other; but the reason of these different assertions of men is this, that the holy writers, in different texts, pursuing different subjects, and speaking to different persons, sometimes seem to favour each of these two opinions *, and men being at a loss to reconcile them by any medium, run into different extremes, and entirely follow one of these tracks of thought, and neglect the other.

But surely, if there can be a way found to reconcile these two doctrines of the absolute salvation of the elect, by the obedience, righteousness and death of *Christ* procuring it for them, with all things necessary to the possession of it, and also of the conditional salvation provided for all mankind, and offered to them in the gospel, through the all-sufficient and overflowing value of the obedience and sufferings of *Christ*; this will be the most fair, natural and easy way of reconciling these different texts of scripture, without any strain or torture put upon any of them.

Nor indeed can I conceive why the remonstrant should be uneasy to have pardon and salvation absolutely provided for the elect, since all the rest of mankind, especially such as hear the gospel, have the same conditional salvation which they contend for, sincerely proposed to their acceptance; nor can I see any reason why the strictest calvinist should be angry, that the all-sufficient merit of *Christ* should overflow so far in it's influence, as to provide conditional salvation for all mankind, since the elect of God have that certain and absolute salvation which they contend for, secured to them by the same merit; and especially since that great and admirable reformer, *John Calvin*, whose name they affect to wear, and to whose authority they pay so great a regard, has so plainly declared in his writings, that there is a sense in which *Christ* died for the sins of the whole world, or all mankind; and he sometimes goes so far as to call this the redemption of all. See his comments on the following scriptures †.

Matth. xxvii. 8. "This is my blood of the new testament, which was shed for many for the remission of sins. Sub multorum nomine non partem mundi tantum designat, sed totum humanum genus. Under the name of many, he signifies not a part of the world only, but all mankind."

Rom. v. 18. "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. Communem omnium gratiam facit quia omnibus exposita est, non quod ad omnes extendatur re ipsa: Nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi, atque omnibus indifferenter Dei benignitate offertur, non tamen omnes apprehendunt. He makes this grace common to all, because it is set before all, though not really and in fact reached out to all. For though *Christ* suffered for the sins of the whole world, and he is offered indifferently to all by the bounty of God, yet all do not receive him."

I Cor. viii. 11, 12. "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom *Christ* died?" On which *Calvin* remarks thus: If the soul of every weak person

* This is a most evident truth, that scripture, in different parts of it, seems by it's expressions to favour each of these opinions; otherwise it could never be, that the writers of the different parties should each of them bring so many texts to support and vindicate their own sentiments, and which plainly give so much difficulty and perplexity to the writers of the opposite side to answer them.

† It may be proper to observe here, that some of the most rigid and narrow limitations of grace to men are found chiefly in his "institutions," which were written in his youth. But his comments on scripture were the labours of his riper years and maturer judgment.

person was the purchase of the blood of *Christ*, he that for the sake of a little meat, plunges his brother again into death who was redeemed by *Christ*, shews at how mean a rate he esteems the blood of *Christ*."

1 *John* ii. 2. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Hic movetur quæstio, quomodo mundi totius peccata expientur? — aliqui dixerunt — Sufficenter pro toto mundo pallium esse Christum, sed pro electis tantum efficaciter. Vulgo hæc solutio in scholis obtinuit: Ego quanquam verum esse illud dictum fateor, nego tamen præsentì loco quadrare. Here a question is raised, How can the sins of the whole world be expiated? Some have said, *Christ* suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but effectually for the elect alone. This is the common solution of the schools: And though I confess this is a truth, yet I do not think it agrees to this place."

2 *Pet.* ii. 1. "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." "Tametsi variis modis abnegatur Christus, eum tamen hic, meo iudicio, attingit Petrus, qui exprimitur apud Judam: nempe, dum gratia Dei in lasciviam convertitur. Redemit enim nos Christus, ut populum haberet segregatum ab omnibus mundi inquinamentis, addictum sanctitati & innocentia. Qui igitur excusso fræno, in omnem licentiam se projiciunt, non immeritò dicuntur Christum abnegare, à quo redempti sunt. That is, though *Christ* is denied many ways, yet in my opinion *Peter* means the same thing here which *Jude* expresses, viz. that the grace of God is turned into wantonness: for *Christ* hath redeemed us, that he might have a people free from all the defilements of the world, and devoted to holiness and innocence: Whosoever therefore shake off the yoke, and throw themselves into all licentiousness, are justly said to deny *Christ*, by whom they were redeemed."

Jude, verse 4. "Turning the grace of our God into wantonness, and denying the only Lord God, and *Jesus Christ* our Lord. Christum verò abnegari intelligit, quum hi qui sanguine illius redempti fuerant, diabolo se rursus mancipantes, incomparabile illud pretium quantum in se irritum faciunt." The apostle here means that *Christ* is denied, when these who were redeemed with his blood, again enslave themselves to the devil, and, as far as in them lies, make that incomparable price vain and ineffectual.

Thus it appears, that *Calvin* himself thought that *Christ* and his salvation are offered to all, and that in some sense he died for all.

But I proceed to the last consideration.

Consideration VI. That all mankind have some conditional salvation provided for them, and some real grace and pardon offered to them by a new covenant, appears from this, that all men, both wicked and righteous, "or just and unjust, shall be raised from the dead, to give an account of things done in the body, whether good or evil," and to receive rewards or punishments in their body, as well as in their souls, according to their improvement or misimprovement of the dispensations under which they have lived. This seems to be the sense of several scriptures, *John* v. 28, 29. 2 *Cor.* v. 10. Now a resurrection is by no means provided by the law of innocency or the covenant of works: That only threatens death for sin, without the least hint or thought of the body's rising again. This doctrine of the resurrection therefore seems to be the effect of the overflowing merit of *Christ*, and perhaps that expression of the apostle may have some

reference

reference to it. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in *Adam* all die, so in *Christ* shall all be made alive: though I confess it may be also construed and confined only to the resurrection of the saints. But it is evident that *Jesus Christ* has this power to raise the dead, even sinners as well as saints, and "authority to judge all the world, given him of the Father as a mediator, or because he is the son of man.—And all that are in the graves—shall come forth; they who have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation:" *John* v. 25—29. They who have believed in *Christ*, and obeyed him, shall be raised up at last to happiness; but those who have disobeyed the gospel, shall be raised in order to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." 2 *Thess.* i. 9.

Now surely this resurrection of all mankind must be built upon the foot of a new covenant given or offered to all mankind, since the old covenant of innocency, or the law of works, appoints eternal life without dying for the obedient, and death without a resurrection for the disobedient. Such a covenant therefore as admits natural death to seize even upon those who are obedient to it, and provides a resurrection even for those who are disobedient, must needs be a different covenant from the law of works, which admits no death for the one, nor provides any resurrection for the other.

There was therefore doubtless a general proclamation of pardon and salvation to all mankind, who were fallen in *Adam*, contained in the first promise, or the gospel that was preached to *Adam*, the first father of mankind, by God himself, in the garden after his fall: And this was again preached to all the world by *Noah*, the second father of mankind, and a preacher of righteousness; otherwise I think the resurrection would not reach to every man and woman in the world.

Let it be considered also, that this very resurrection of the bodies of sinful mankind, brings with it an additional penalty and misery, beyond what the law of innocency threatened, even the everlasting punishment of the new-raised body, and the soul as united to it: Now this cannot, with such evident justice, be inflicted upon the non-elect, if they are under no other covenant but that of innocency, or the law of works, because no such punishment is threatened or implied in that law, as far as I can read it.

Nor would there have been any such thing as sinners arising from the dead, that we can find in the bible, if *Christ Jesus* had not taken upon him to be a mediator between God and fallen man, so far as to set mankind upon some new foot of hope; and thus unbelievers and impenitent persons are punished in their new-raised bodies, for rejecting this hope. For since the broken law or covenant of works leaves the body under the power of death for ever, we can hardly suppose that the Son of God, the chief minister of his Father's grace, would provide a resurrection of the body for breakers of that original law, merely to put them to severer punishments and more intense torments, than that broken law threatened, if there were not some advantage in the nature of things, derived to them from his mediation, to balance it: Now what equal advantage is there to balance this severer punishment, if there be not some conditional hope of their recovery from the misery of their fallen state, upon supposition that they sincerely endeavour to perform all the duties of this new covenant, as far as the revelation of them comes within their notice; that is, that they repent of their sins, and trust in the divine grace and forgiveness, in order to their acceptance.

Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the righteous and appointed judge, will never give occasion for any of all the miserable multitude to say, that they are condemned to an end-

less punishment in their new raised bodies, for breaking God's original law of innocency, which punishment was never threatened in that law. He will never give them reason to complain, that, with regard to them, he came not to be a mediator or a Saviour, but merely to add to their misery, by a resurrection to eternal pain, without any equivalent of hope: Or that he came to expose them to double damnation for refusing his grace, when he had none for them to accept. The goodness and equity of God, and his Son, will never suffer such an imputation to fall upon any part of their transactions: And as they have both agreed in pronouncing these words, *John* iii. 17. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved *; they will both agree also in such a conduct, as shall not so much as appear to run counter to such a solemn expression of grace, or to the common notions and rules of justice.

Since therefore it appears pretty evident, that *Jesus*, the righteous judge, will not condemn sinners for refusing that grace and that salvation, which had no reality in things, and which was never really offered to their acceptance, nor so much as provided; and since he will never punish sinners by the mere law or covenant of works, with the punishment of a resurrection of the body, which were never threatened nor included in that law or covenant; we must conclude, according to the representation of scripture, according to the rules of justice, and the reason of things, that there must be some other covenant, some covenant of grace and salvation, under which all men are situated, and which has really been offered to all mankind, either in clearer or in more obscure notices thereof; such a covenant, whereby the resurrection of the body to eternal happiness, is the appointed reward of those who receive this offered salvation; and whereby the resurrection of the body to eternal misery, is the appointed punishment of those who refuse to comply with the grace of that dispensation under which they are placed, and neglect to receive this salvation.

Thus I think I have proved it pretty clearly, at least to my own satisfaction, that the non-elect among men are not predestinated to eternal misery by any absolute act of reprobation, nor are they left in the state of fallen angels or devils, for whom there is no Saviour appointed, and who cannot have any reasonable hope; but that there is a conditional salvation provided for all men, and offered to them in the gospel, by the glorious all-sufficiency and redundancy of the merit of *Christ*.

The doctrine of reprobation, in the most severe and absolute sense of it, stands in such a direct contradiction to all our notions of kindness and love to others, in which the blessed God is set forth as our example, that our reason cannot tell how to receive it. Yet, if it were never so true, and never so plainly revealed in scripture, it would only be a doctrine which might require our humble assent, and our silent submission to it, with awful reverence of the majesty and sovereignty of the great God. But it is by no means a doctrine, in which we, as men, could or should rejoice and glory, or take pleasure in it; because it hath so dreadful an aspect on far the greatest part of our fellow-creatures, considered as mere creatures. Nor do I think the blessed God would require us so far to divest ourselves of humanity, as to take a secret satisfaction in the absolute and eternal appointment of such numbers

* If the word "world" in the two or three first places, signifies "mankind" without distinction, why should the "world" in the last place signify only the elect? Is not a conditional or indefinite salvation here intimated to be provided for mankind, whether they be *Jews* or gentiles.

bers of our kindred in flesh and blood, to everlasting perdition: Much less should we make this awful and terrible article a matter of our publick boast and triumph, even if we could prove it to be revealed, but rather mourn for it.

And since there are so many expressions of scripture, that give us reason to think that *Christ* lived and died in some respects as a common mediator of mankind, though with a peculiar regard to the elect, methinks this doctrine of the extensive goodness of God, is a much more desirable opinion, and should be more cheerfully received by us, as it is so agreeable to our duty of charity to all men, and seems so necessary to us at present, for vindicating the justice, goodness and sincerity of the blessed God, in his transactions with mankind.

When therefore I hear men talk of the doctrine of reprobation, with a special gust and relish, as a favourite article, I cannot but suspect their good temper, and question whether they love their neighbour as they do themselves. The case is very different, when saints are called in scripture to rejoice in the publick judgments of God, exercised upon the antichristian state, or upon the wicked oppressors, and incorrigible sinners of the world: for that is the effect of God's equity and righteousness, as a wise and faithful governor; but this would be an instance merely of his dreadful sovereignty and terror, and hardly consistent with goodness.

I would ask leave also in this place to enquire, what great advantages can be derived to religion or christianity, by endeavouring to limit the extent of the death of *Christ*, and to take away all manner of hopes, and prayers, and endeavours from the non elect. Does the doctrine of election of persons obtain any further confirmation by it? No, by no means. Their salvation is secured, whatsoever becomes of the rest of mankind, whether they have any hopes or no. Does the goodness and special grace of God acquire any further honours by this limitation? No certainly. Divine grace is perfectly the same towards the elect, as though there were no other person in the world. Are the elect any way discouraged by it? Not in the least: But many persons who are awakened to a sense of sin, and are seeking after *Christ* for salvation, by this narrow doctrine may be terribly discouraged from receiving his offers of grace, when they are taught to doubt whether there be any grace provided for them, or whether *Jesus* be appointed to act as their Saviour. It may be a means to drive some poor souls to despair, when they hear, that unless they are elected, they may seek after salvation by *Christ* in vain, for there is none purchased for them, not so much as conditionally: And it may tempt them to begin at the wrong end, and seek to pry into the counsels of God, and enquire after what they can never know, that is, their election of God, before they dare trust in grace, or submit to the gospel of *Christ*.

Now if many inconveniences may arise from this limitation of the whole virtue of the blood of *Christ* only to the elect, and utterly secluding all the rest of mankind; and if no valuable end or advantage to religion can be obtained by this narrow opinion, what should make men so zealous to get the greatest part of the world excluded utterly from all hopes, and all salvation?

I know there have been many objections raised against this charitable opinion of the extent of *Christ's* death in books of controversy; but the two chief and most plausible are these, which I will endeavour chiefly to answer, and by these answers lead the way for solving the rest.

Objection I. But may it not be said here, if there be only an outward sufficiency of salvation provided for the non-elect, by a conditional pardon procured through

the death of *Christ* if they should repent and believe, but no inward sufficiency of grace provided to enlighten their minds, to change their hearts, and enable them to exercise this faith and repentance, the event will be infallibly and necessarily the same, and their damnation as necessary and certain, as if there were no outward salvation provided; since they of themselves cannot repent, they cannot believe; for by the fall all men are become blind in spiritual things, and dead in sin.

Answer. It is granted, that no sinner will truly and sincerely repent and believe in *Christ*, without the powerful and effectual influences of converting grace; and therefore they are called blind and dead in sin, because God knows the final event will be the same as if they were under a natural impossibility, or utter natural impotence. And for this reason the conversion of a sinner is called, a new creation; being born again; giving sight to the blind; or, a resurrection from the dead: And the necessity of divine power to effect this change, is held forth in many places of scripture.

Yet we must say still, that sinners are not under such a real natural impossibility of repenting and believing, as though they were naturally blind or dead. It is true, the blind and the dead have lost their natural powers of seeing and moving; but when scripture represents the inability of sinners to repent, or believe in *Christ*, by such figures and metaphors as death or blindness, it must be remembered these are but metaphors and figures, such as the holy writers, and all the eastern nations frequently use; and they must not be understood in their literal powers or faculties of understanding, will, and affections, which are the only natural powers necessary to believe and repent.

Now it is plain that these natural faculties, powers, or capacities, are not lost by the fall; for if they were, there would be no manner of need or use of any moral means or motives, such as commands, threatenings, promises, exhortations; these would all be impertinent and absurd, for they could have no more influence on sinners, than if we command or exhort a blind person to see, or a dead body to rise or move; which commands and exhortations would appear ridiculous and useless. And since the blessed God, in his word; uses these moral means and motives to call sinners to repentance and faith, it is certain that they have natural powers and faculties sufficient to understand and practise these duties; and therefore they are not under a necessity of sinning, and of being destroyed, since there is nothing more wanted in a way of sufficient natural powers, faculties, or abilities, than what they have.

All the other impotence and inability therefore in sinners to repent or believe, properly speaking, is but moral, or seated chiefly in their wills. It is a great disinclination or aversion in these natural faculties, to attend to, learn, or practise the things of God and religion*; and this holds them fast in their sinful state in a similar way, as if they were blind and dead, and I said the final event will be the same,

* I grant this inability to repent has been sometimes called by our divines a natural impotence, because it arises from the original corruption of our nature since the fall of *Adam*; and in this sense I fully believe it. But this spring of it is much better signified and expressed by the name of native impotence, to shew that it comes from our birth; and the quality of this impotence is best called moral, being seated chiefly in the will and affections, and not in any want of natural powers or faculties to perform what God requires: And the reason is plain, viz that no new natural powers are given by converting grace, but only a change of the moral bent or inclination of the soul, a happier turn given to our natural faculties by the sovereign grace of God and his Spirit.

same, that is, they will never repent without almighty grace. And upon this account that strong and settled inclination to sin, and aversion to God, which is in the will or affections, is represented in our own language, as well as in the eastern countries, by impotence or inability to forsake or subdue sin: As when a drunkard shall say, "I had such a strong desire to the liquor, that I could not but drink to excess, I could not withhold the cup from my mouth:" Or when a murderer shall say, "I hated my neighbour so much, that having a fair opportunity, I could not help killing him:" Or when we say to a man of fury in his passion, "you are so warm at present, that you cannot see things in a true light, you cannot hearken to reason, you cannot judge aright; you are not capable of acting regularly." And that this is the manner of speaking in the eastern countries, is evident from the bible, *Gen. xxxvii. 4.* "Joseph's brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him:" Yet you will grant all this is but moral impotence, that is, a very strong inclination to excess of drink, or murder, or passion, or a strong aversion to the contrary virtues. Even in the things of common life the "can-not" sometimes signifies nothing but the "will-not." *Luke xi. 7.* "Trouble me not, my door is shut, my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise to give thee;" that is, I will not. And with regard to faith, or believing in *Christ*, our Saviour explains his own language in this manner. In one place he saith, "No man can come unto me except my Father draw him," *John vi. 44.* And in another place he charges the *jews* with this as their fault: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," *John v. 40.* So in the parable one excuse is, *Luke xiv. 20.* "I have married a wife, and—I cannot come." All these citations intend the same thing: Their "can-not" is their "will-not," that is, it is the strength of their aversion to *Christ*, which is a moral impotence or inability to believe in him, and the fault lies in the will.

St. *Paul* speaks to the same purpose, *Rom. viii. 7, 8.* where he shews, that it is the aversion or enmity of the carnal mind to God, which hinders it from obeying the law of God, and at last he says, it cannot be subject to it. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: So then they who are in the flesh cannot please God." The fault still lies in the will of sinful man; and it is this makes it criminal, while it is not naturally impossible to be avoided or overcome.

And upon this account God is pleased to use moral means and motives, viz. promises, threatenings, commands, &c. toward all men, such as are suited to awaken their hearts, and excite and persuade their will to use all their natural abilities, to set their natural powers or faculties to work, to attend to, and learn, and practise faith and repentance; and it is by these very means God persuades his elect powerfully to repent and believe. But when persons will not hear, nor be influenced by these motives, because of their strong and wilful aversion to God and godliness, their crime is entirely their own, and their condemnation is just. They have natural powers or faculties in them, which, if well tried, might overcome their native propensity to vice, though they never will do it.

If the great God, in a way of sovereign mercy, gives some persons superior aids of grace to overcome this moral impotence, and conquer this aversion to God and goodness*; if he effectually leads, inclines, or persuades them by his Spirit to repent

* Whether the Spirit of God effectually persuade the will to repent and believe in *Christ*, by immediate influence upon the will itself, or by setting the things of the gospel before the mind in so strong a light, and persuading the soul so to attend to them, as shall effectually influence the will, this shall not be

pent and believe in *Christ*, this does not at all hinder the others from exercising their natural powers of understanding, and will in believing and repenting.

Nor can any thing of their guilt and wilful impenitence be imputed to the blessed God, who is Lord of his own favours, and gives or with holds where he pleases, and "who shall say to him, what dost thou?" Why should my eye be evil toward my neighbour, because the eye of God is good? Or what pretence have I to charge God with injustice, when he does more for me than he is bound to do, though he does more for my neighbour than he has done for me?

Let this then be constantly maintained, there is a natural, inward sufficiency of powers and faculties given to every sinner to hearken to the calls and offers of grace and the gospel, though they lie under a moral impotence; and there is an outward sufficiency of provision of pardon in the death of *Christ*, for every one who repents and accepts the gospel, though pardon is not actually procured for all men, nor secured to them. And thus much is sufficient to maintain the sincerity of God in his universal offers of grace through *Jesus Christ*, and his present commands to all men to repent and trust in his mercy; as well as to vindicate his equity in the last great day, when the impenitent and unbelievers shall be condemned. Their death lies at their own doors, for since there was both an outward and inward sufficiency for their recovery, the fault must lie in their own free-will, in their wilful aversion to God and *Christ*, and his salvation. I think this distinction of natural and moral power and impotence, will reconcile all the various expressions of scripture on this subject, both to one another, as well as to the reason of things, which can hardly be reconciled any other way.

Objection II. Suppose the non-elect are not debarred from this salvation, by the want of natural powers sufficient to receive and accept it, yet since the great God foresees this their aversion to repentance and holiness, and foreknows they will never accept the salvation of *Christ*, and that as certainly as if they had already renounced it; does not this future certainty of the event lay an effectual bar against their believing and accepting it? For if they should repent and accept, it would contradict the foreknowledge of God.

We enquire also further, can his offers of grace be sincere to persons whom he foresees will certainly reject it? What are these offers, but delusions of their hope, and appointed aggravations to increase their guilt; since God certainly knows these offers of grace will be abused only to sinful purposes?

Answer I. As for the first part of this enquiry, if we will give our selves leave to think impartially upon the case, we must agree, that the mere knowledge of any event, without any real influence from the power that knows, does not make the event necessary, whether it be foreknown or after-known. If I foreknow the sun will rise to-morrow, that has no more influence on the sun's rising than my after-knowledge that it rose yesterday.

Now the great God; among his unsearchable powers and perfections, has a knowledge of the agency of free causes, as we have of necessary causes: And as he has a full view of all concomitant circumstances, he hath a way to foresee events in their contingent causes, such as the free will of man is, as well as we have a way by reason to foresee many things in
their

be any matter of my present debate or determination; for in both these the event and consequences are much the same: There is no new natural power or faculty given to the soul in order to faith and repentance, but a divine influence upon the old natural powers, giving them a new and better turn.

their necessary causes. It is certain he does foreknow the future contingent actions of men, even their wicked actions, because he has foretold a multitude of them in the bible; and it is granted, that from his foreknowledge of any future event, we may infer the consequential certainty of it, because his fore-knowledge cannot be deceived; yet this does not at all prove his antecedent determination of it by any decree, nor his influence upon it: Neither can we infer from God's mere foreknowledge, that there is any natural necessity of the event, since the causes are but contingent, such as man's free-will. The distinction between the certainty of a future event, with the consequent necessity of it, derived from God's foreknowledge, and the antecedent necessity of it, derived from the nature of things, or from God's actual pre-determination of it, sufficiently solves this difficulty. The first may be where the second is not.

Answer II. We have reason to believe, that the Gospel is never sent, nor the proposals of salvation made to any people, city, or nation, where God foresees there are none at all that will accept of it. Now in the way of God's government of this world, he deals with mankind as a number of free and moral agents, and publishes and offers sincerely his benefits to men in general, promiscuously to the elect and the non-elect: And while by these same proposals, means, and motives, he effectually and powerfully gathers his elect out of the world, he gives sufficient encouragement to all sinners to accept the same grace. God's secret foreknowledge of those who will not accept it, is by no means a sufficient reason to prevent or forbid the general offers of his grace to them, because the design of his government is to treat mankind as reasonable and moral agents.

Answer III. There may be valuable and unknown ends and purposes in the government of God, attained by his sincere forbidding sin to creatures, whom he knows resolved to practise it; and by his sincere commands of duty to creatures whom he knows resolved to neglect it; and that without any real injury or injustice done to the sinner. The wisdom, holiness and dignity of his government must be maintained in all the just appearances of it, though sinners will rebel against it; for the honour of divine government in the authority, wisdom and holiness of it, is of much more importance than the welfare of ten thousand of his creatures. "Let God be true, saith the scripture, though every man be a liar." *Rom. iii. 4.* Let God appear sincere and wise, glorious and holy, though every man should turn rebel. God may wisely and sincerely publish the doctrines of salvation with sufficient light and evidence about them, to those who he knows will not believe them: He may wisely and sincerely offer grace and salvation to those who he foresees will refuse it.

Would it be an act of folly or of injustice, or of untruth or insincerity, in a wise and good man, to give forth his commands to ten children, though by all present appearances, his great wisdom and sagacity foresees that seven of them will disobey him, and only three comply? Should he not approve himself to the world in doing what is wise and good, and in maintaining his parental character with honour, though some of his sons neglect their filial duty? Hereby also he gives his three obedient children an opportunity to shew their duty and love, though the other seven will take occasion thence to discover their rebellion. The great God, in his government of the world, conducts his unsearchable affairs by such general laws and rules, as is most for his honour; and neither his holiness nor his goodness make it necessary for him

him to change this his wife conduct, though he foresees many of his creatures will grow worse instead of better by it.

Answer IV. Whether or no we can guess at any of the reasons of God's government or conduct in this thing, yet the matter of fact is certain, and beyond all dispute. God has acted in this manner, and does act thus in many instances: He sent his gospel to the *jews* by his son *Jesus*, though he foreknew, and even foretold by his prophets, that the *jews* would reject the gospel, and murder the divine messenger. He gave his word of warning, his call to repentance and righteousness, to be preached by *Noah* to a wicked world, for one hundred and twenty years, though he foreknew that very few would be reformed by *Noah's* preaching; and he told *Noah*, that at the end of those years he would bring a flood over the world to destroy the wicked inhabitants of it, who would not be reformed. Again, when he put *Adam* and *Eve* into paradise under the law of innocency, and forbid them to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, we also believe he foreknew that *Adam* and *Eve* would eat this fruit, and disobey their creator; and yet he wisely forbid them to eat it. Now since we know that a just God hath in fact done these things, we must confess there cannot be the least injustice in them.

Nay, we may go a step farther in these matters of fact. God has actually sent his Son and his gospel with miracles and divine evidence, where he knew they would not be received, or at most by a very few, that is, to *Chorazin*, *Capernaum*, and *Bethsaida* in *Galilee*; and yet he never sent this gospel, with such evidence, to *Tyre* and *Sidon*, to *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, where *Christ* tells us, it would have been received, and the inhabitants "would have repented in sackcloth and ashes," *Matth. xi. 21.* we are sure there is nothing unjust in all this transaction, because we know God has done it, "who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works," *Psal. cxlv. 17.*

Let us then content ourselves with knowing the things that make for our own peace, and humbly submit to the wise and gracious government of God, for our own eternal happiness, though we cannot enter into the impenetrable secrets of his counsel, nor solve all difficulties therein, because our short and narrow view of things cannot comprehend them: And yet, at the same time, if we can, by our reasonings according to scripture, cast any happy gleam of light into these darkneses of providence, whereby any honour may be done to God, any imputation of injustice taken off from his conduct, any scruples of mankind satisfied, and any angry contentions removed; it is neither unlawful nor improper to attempt and seek after such advantages: And with this view and hope I would propose the three following questions.

Q U E S -

Q U E S T I O N XIV.

Can the different opinions of christians, concerning the operations of divine grace on the souls of men, be reconciled?

THE corruption and degeneracy of mankind, by the fall of *Adam*, is generally and truly supposed by our protestant divines, to be so great and universal, and their weakness or impotence to change their own sinful natures into holiness, is so evident, both in the discourses of the sacred writers, and in the experience of men, that it is agreed among most or all of them, there is a necessity of some aids of divine grace towards our recovery; and that not only to provide, by proper outward means, such a salvation as may be answerable to the miseries we labour under, and to propose it outwardly and plainly in the gospel, but the best of us stand in need, in our fallen state, also of some further favour from heaven, some inward assistances and influences of the grace of God, and his Spirit, in order to restore us from the ruins of our fall by repentance, and to enable us to accept of the salvation which is procured by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the mediator.

There have been some writers indeed, who profess christianity, who suppose nothing else is necessary, in order to the recovery of fallen man, where the gospel is preached, but the mere outward proposal of this gospel, and the representation of the readiness of God to pardon the sins of those that repent and believe, together with all the motives of hope and fear, &c. which are made use of in the bible, to awaken and excite sinners to return unto God. They imagine, that the providential disposal of the outward circumstances of men, by their enjoying the benefit of a pious education, or their sitting under a useful ministry, or the advantage of having good company frequently to converse with, and religious books brought in their way, with opportunity and leisure for reading, &c. are abundantly sufficient "to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God," *Acts* xxvi. 18. to renew them unto holiness, and to make new creatures of them, fit for the business and blessedness of heaven. Now these kind providences are what they call "the grace of God," and the only grace they will allow to be necessary to our salvation.

This was the most common sentiment of the ancient *pelagians**, who gave so much trouble to the churches of *Christ* in early times, and which occasioned the

VOL. VI.

Q q

labours

* It is pity the professed disciples and followers of the religion of *Christ* should have been divided into so many different opinions, and thereby given occasion to distinguish them by so many different names, which are chiefly derived either from their several tenets, or some practice of their forefathers, or from some signal writers who espoused, defended or propagated those different sentiments. I could wish with all my soul that they were all of one opinion, and all confined only to the single name of christians, which was given them first at *Antioch*, to distinguish them from heathens, jews and infidels of every kind. But since there are such multitudes of different sentiments among them, and in writing controversies, one cannot conveniently use a long periphrasis to describe each of them, sufficient to distinguish them from the rest, we are constrained to make use of those names by which they have either distinguished themselves, or the world hath distinguished them, such as *pelagians*, strict *calvinists*, *arminians* or remonstrants, and moderate *calvinists* or reconcilers.

But

labours of St. *Augustine* to be much employed in the refutation of their errors: Afterward they allowed some illumination of the understanding by divine grace.

But I fear those who embrace the old *pelagian* doctrines, have too little regard to the express language of scripture, and to it's most obvious sense, when it speaks so much about the power or grace of God, and the operations of the Spirit of God, in giving us a new heart, creating a clean heart in us, enlightening our minds, converting our souls, or turning us to God, and creating us a-new after the image of God, working in us both to will and to do, &c. whereby some inward and effectual operations of divine grace, upon the minds or hearts of men, are so plainly expressed, that even the remonstrants or *arminians* themselves, I think, in all their ranks and classes have supposed some such inward workings of the grace of God upon the heart; because so many plain texts of scripture could never be otherwise interpreted, without an unreasonable force put upon them. Yet I think it must be acknowledged, that these last named writers do expressly allow these inward operations of God, to go no farther than to render men salvable, and to leave the powers of men in a state of indifference, to convert and turn themselves to God, but not effectually to determine and secure their salvation; of which I shall speak more immediately.

Among those who admit of divine grace to operate inwardly on the minds and hearts of men, there have been several different opinions what this grace is, how far it reaches, and how much of it is necessary towards the recovery of man.

But before I represent these several opinions, I would lay down some general propositions, which I think may be assented to by most or all of them, and exhibit them as a medium of reconciliation to one another: And I shall rejoice, if I may be so far favoured of providence, as to convince them how their several different sentiments may all be tolerably reconciled to these general propositions, and thereby take away a great deal of that noisy controversy which has unhappily perplexed the church of *Christ* upon this subject.

Proposition I. God has provided a glorious salvation for fallen men by *Jesus Christ*, which is sufficient for all men in it's own nature, and shall be certainly effectual to all that are willing to accept of it upon his appointed terms, or in his own appointed way, that is, in a way of repentance for sin, renewal unto holiness, and faith or dependence on the mercy of God through *Jesus Christ*.

Proposition II. Since God has made so glorious a provision for the recovery of mankind, he will not leave it to mere chance and uncertainty, whether any person shall repent and accept of this offered salvation or no; lest, through the universal depravation and wretched obstinacy of men, his own gracious counsels for our salvation should be frustrated, and the important labours and sufferings of his Son be sustained to no saving purpose, and rendered almost useless to the world.

Propo-

But here let it be observed, that the most rigid *calvinists*, who pretend to carry the doctrines of divine grace to the greatest height of resistless and sovereign efficiency, and the *pelagians*, who generally reduce it to the lowest degree, that is, to mere favourable outward providences, are counted the two extremes in this controversy about divine grace: And between these two there are almost as many degrees and classes of different sentiments, as there are writers. Some of them approach a little nearer to the one side, and some to the other: And it is not fit that any persons should be comprehended under any of these names, but which they themselves allow or chuse, according as they come nearest to the opinions of this or the other party.

Proposition III. There is no way, which I can conceive of, how God should secure or ascertain the salvation of any in general, or make it sure even to his own fore-knowledge, unless it be some way or other ascertained, which particular persons shall accept of this grace and salvation.

Observe, I do not here go so far as to say, the salvation of those particular persons should be made necessary by any such absolute decree, or such irresistible influences as some have asserted; but it must some way or other be made certain to the foreknowledge of God, that such particular persons shall be saved; for if it be left at utter uncertainty as to every individual, how can it possibly be known that any individuals at all shall be finally partakers of it?

Proposition IV. God will magnify his grace in the salvation of all those who are saved in such a manner, that every one shall acknowledge his own salvation perfectly owing to the divine mercy; and that none shall have any cause or occasion to glory in himself, but shall confess to the glory of divine grace, that it is grace that is the supreme and the chief cause that has made him to differ from others. Without this there could not be a holy harmony and concert among all the saved number, in their songs of praise to God and their Saviour; "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy grace be all the glory:" Nor indeed could any tolerable interpretation be given to many scriptures, which humble the pride of man, by ascribing all to God.

Proposition V. How much soever the blessed God may design to manifest and magnify his free and sovereign grace towards sinful men, yet in every step of his procedure he will maintain such an invariable regard to his equity, as governor of the world, that he will never exercise his grace in such a manner as to take away the necessary regards and honours due to his governing justice. The great God has given man an understanding mind to distinguish between good and evil, and a freedom of will to chuse one or the other, and ordained him to be always, and in all circumstances, a proper subject of his moral government. And he has determined and resolved in righteousness to manifest himself at last as a judge, and "render to every one according to their works:" *Rom. ii. 6.* And therefore he will maintain this righteous design of his government, to make the eternal rewards and punishments of men to depend on what they themselves have freely chosen, whether it be good or evil: Nor will he ever do any thing inconsistent with this his glorious and universal design, as a righteous governor and judge of his intelligent creatures.

Proposition VI. Therefore when divine grace operates upon the minds or wills of men, in order to their conversion and salvation, it is generally done in such a soft, gentle and connatural manner, that does not put any violence upon the faculties of the soul: But for the most part, the grace of God, and his holy Spirit, seem to operate insensibly, as though our own faculties wrought this of themselves, and without any strong, certain, and evident notice, that it is the operation of any spirit superior to our own: And yet, by the blessed effects of our conversion and sanctification, compared with the records of scripture, we certainly infer it must be by virtue of some divine influence received from above, that the glory may be given unto God and his grace, as the supreme cause of our salvation.

Now if all the particular opinions of parties, about the methods and degrees of the exercise of this inward grace towards the salvation of men, may be pretty well

reconciled to these propositions, I do not see any sufficient occasion for such very noisy and angry contests as have been found in the christian church upon this subject; since they agree in these most necessary and most important things which relate to the honour of divine justice, and divine grace, as they are represented in scripture; though perhaps there may remain some particular texts and expressions of scripture, to which it may be hard to reconcile the contenders on either side.

However, since I think these propositions contain the most important sense and design of the revelations of scripture on this subject, and I am persuaded they may be solidly maintained and defended by scripture, and reason, and experience, I hope we shall be able to shew, that all the different schemes are consistent, in some measure, with these propositions.

Let us now recount the three chief sentiments of men under the several letters of the alphabet, A, C, and R, for the sake of better distinction.

C imagines mankind to be so entirely and universally corrupted by the fall, and impotent to all that is good, the mind to be so blind, the will so perverse, and the affections set upon carnal objects with such obstinacy, that there must be an immediate operation of God, by his grace, in a physical or supernatural manner, on all the several powers of our nature, to rectify them, and make them capable, willing and fit to be partakers of this salvation. He supposes there must be special, efficacious, and irresistible influences of the holy Spirit on the mind or understanding to enlighten it, to see and discern divine things in their beauty and excellency, which they can never see without this sovereign influence; there must be an immediate, effectual, and irresistible operation * on the will and affections, to give them a new bent or bias, and an effectual turn from sin and the creature, to God and holiness: And that this habit or principle of divine grace must not only be wrought into the soul as a new habit or principle, but it must be maintained every moment by the same effectual influences of grace, and it must be entirely awakened and excited into exercise in this manner, in every good thought, word or deed: For he thinks such scriptures as these require it, viz. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, but our sufficiency is of God." *2 Cor.* iii. 5. "We are dead in trespasses and sins." *Ephes.* ii. 1. "We are alienated from the life of God through the blindness of our hearts." chapter iv. 18. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," *John* iii. 6. and the works of the flesh they do: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God:" *Rom.* viii. 8. "We must be born of the Spirit, or we cannot see the kingdom of God." *John* iii. 5. "Without *Christ* we can do nothing." chapter xv. 5. "No man can come unto *Christ* unless it be given him of the Father, or unless the Father draw him." chapter vi. 44, 65. "Faith is the gift of God." *Ephes.* ii. 8. "Our good works must be wrought in God," *John* iii. 21. or thou, O Lord, hast wrought all our works in us." *Isaiab* xxvi. 12. "We must be born again." *John* iii. 7. "We must be new created unto good works." *Ephes.* ii. 10. "We must be quickened or raised from the dead." verses 5, 6. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure," *Phil.* ii. 13. And many other such scriptures which express the insufficiency of man, and the all-sufficient and sovereign grace of God, in the highest and most exalted language.

A re-

* Though some of this class of writers use the word "irresistible," yet others of them dislike it, because the subjects of this grace may and sometimes do resist the operations of this grace and Spirit for a considerable time, but at last it must overcome; and therefore they rather chuse to call it "insuperable."

A renounces and disclaims utterly this opinion of C, because he supposes it to be inconsistent with the fifth proposition, or God's moral government of the world: "For, saith he, if mankind be so utterly destitute of all power whatsoever, to repent and accept of divine grace; and if it is God himself, who, by immediate physical or supernatural influences, does irresistibly work in every good christian, a principle of repentance and holiness, by a sovereign and effectual turn and bias given to their wills, and moves them to every act of duty, by sovereign, physical, or supernatural impressions; then men are no longer moral agents, and the freedom of their wills is lost in a kind of necessary mechanism. They are acted and moved like so many puppets, through the several services and stages of human life, and carried on to their own happiness in heaven, with such a force or power, and necessity, as takes away the very nature of virtue or piety, or any moral goodness, and does not leave so much as any act of obedience in their own free choice. This seems, says he, to disappoint the blessed God of the glory of his righteous government, and of the honour due to his rectoral justice, in the distribution of rewards and punishments.

"This insuperable and over-swaying grace, says he, seems also to run counter to many of those scriptures which represent this moral government of God, as carried on by rational means, arguments and motives, drawn from the excellency of religion, and from the fear and hope of rewards and punishments, by which the holy scriptures are perpetually addressing the consciences of men: For if this be indeed the case, saith A, men have no more real freedom than so many wooden images, actuated, impelled, and moved onward to the several ends which the maker of them designed. Now it can be no pleasure nor glory to the all-wise, all-righteous, and almighty being, who governs all things, to reward such creatures of mechanism with happiness in another world: nor will the honour of his wise and righteous judgment be manifested by such a conduct."

On the other hand C, who persists in the truth of this fifth proposition, and of God's moral government, still pretends that the wills of men, though swayed by irresistible grace, are yet truly free in every good work, because they still feel in themselves, a spontaneity or willingness to repent or obey, when God works thus powerfully upon them; though they confess they have not the freedom or liberty of chusing and refusing, because the grace is, and must be, irresistible or insuperable, and efficacious. Thus it is plain C is desirous to maintain all the six foregoing propositions, and thinks his scheme is consistent with them; and perhaps it might be so deemed, as he thus defends and explains himself.

But A is by no means satisfied with this sort of solution of the difficulty, this sort of freedom which admits not the will of man to chuse or refuse compliance with the operations of grace: "For it is plain, saith he, in this case, the persons who are so irresistibly moved to repentance and good works, may have a sort of supposed consciousness of their freedom all the way, because they feel themselves made willing; but it is a mere mistaken supposition, for they are no longer free creatures, because this very willingness is powerfully imposed upon them, and they cannot withstand it."

Therefore A is resolved to avoid all these inconveniencies, and on this account he supposes, that both in the first conversion of the soul, and in all future good actions, God has no farther hand than this, viz. first, that he forms the nature and temper of every man, with all his intellectual and animal powers, a knowing mind and free-will; that then he, by his providence, brings them to the hearing and knowledge of
their

their own miserable state by nature, and the way of salvation, by hearing or reading of the gospel of *Christ*; that he secretly and gently, by particular occurrences of life, and by the insensible motions of his own Spirit, sets before men the things of God, and *Christ*, and eternity, with all motives proper to affect and persuade them; that he strikes some supernatural light into their understandings, and he allows some suasive or moral influences or touches of the grace of God, upon the will of men, so far as may relieve them against the too powerful opposition of corrupt nature, and render repentance and conversion easier, and more practicable: And he maintains also, that without these assistances, fallen man would not repent and be converted; and it is found among his expressions, "that grace is absolutely necessary to our having sufficient power to do good, and to perform every act of piety*."

But after all this grace, A leaves men in a state of indeterminate doubt and indifference, whether they shall be finally persuaded to repentance or no: And this is the point of controversy between the disputants on this subject. This A maintains, that grace leaves the heart of man still in a sort of equilibrium, or wavering balance and uncertainty, to determine entirely for it self, whether it will receive the gospel or not, except, perhaps, in some very extraordinary case, as *Paul*, and some of the apostles, &c. who seem to be converted at once. And in short this is the chief center of hinge whereon the debate between A and C turns.

And yet A supposes still his doctrine is very consistent with all the six propositions, and particularly with the fourth, which ascribes the conversion and salvation of men so entirely to divine grace, as the supreme cause: "For, saith he, all the scriptures which ascribe our repentance and conversion to grace, are always supposed to speak in a consistence with God's moral government over free creatures, which many other texts assert and maintain: And therefore those expressions of grace must be interpreted with some limitation."

A thinks fit to add also, that he gives a fair exposition of the scriptures, which ascribe our salvation to the operations of grace, because grace has the chief hand therein; and without these various and necessary operations of grace, sinful man never would be converted and saved. Some of the professed partisans of A have thus expressed themselves §.

" The first way of reconciliation."

R, who cannot intirely approve of the opinion of C, for the reasons which A has given, yet is as much displeas'd with A's opinion, notwithstanding all the excuses he has made; because he fears, it seems, to contradict many of those express scriptures

* See the remonstrances made by those who opposed the synod of *Dort*, whereby they plainly distinguish their opinions from the *pelagians*, and use this language which I have here represented. I wish all those christians in our age and nation, who profess to follow the opinions of the remonstrants, did but come so near to the doctrines of scripture, as the phrases and expressions of these men import.

§ In representing the *calvinist* and the *arminian* schemes here, I am not sensible that I have ascribed any one opinion to either of them, but what I am supported in by *John Calvin* and *Francis Turretine* on one side, and by *Philip Limborch* and the remonstrants at the synod of *Dort*, on the other side.

I grant it has been too often the practice of controversial writers on the *calvinist* side, to represent the *arminians* in the *pelagian* form; and the writers of the *arminian* party have again represented all the *calvinists* in the form of *supralapsarians* and *antinomians*: But this is the way to widen the divisions of the christian world, and inflame the spirits of men against their brethren, and not to reconcile them, which R has here attempted to do.

cures which ascribe the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of men, so powerfully, and plainly, and certainly, to God, and his Spirit, and his grace: And therefore he chuses another sentiment, which he thinks may reconcile all these difficulties; for he supposes his opinion to be more obviously and evidently consistent with the six propositions before laid down, and to be much more agreeable to all the expressions of scripture, which are urged both on the side of A and C: And on this account it is more happily suited, saith he, to ascribe to free grace it's full glory, as well as maintain the honours of God's moral government.

R's opinion therefore is this: He supposes that the fall of man has so perverted his natural powers, that inward effectual grace is necessary to save him; but that the will of man, both in it's first and general turn from sin to repentance and holiness, as well as in all future acts of obedience, maintains it's own liberty, as a power free to act, or not to act: And that it shall never be thus sovereignly, entirely, and irresistibly moved by God, the all-wise governor of mankind, as C imagines. But that, though there are some powerful divine influences, both toward the mind and the will, without which the man would never repent and be saved, yet the will is still a free faculty, and as such, is the only proper subject of moral government; and therefore it's freedom to chuse good or evil, must be always finally left to it's own determination, without which there would be no vice or virtue, nothing proper for reward or punishment, nor for any moral subjection to a wise and righteous creator and governor.

But since R believes the doctrine of particular persons elected to salvation, he goes a middle way to secure the salvation of *Christ* to the particular persons designed, viz. R supposes, that divine grace strikes such a new and perspicuous light into the mind or understanding by supernatural influence, and sets the great things of the gospel and eternity in such a powerful and bright view before the soul, as fully convinces the judgment, and such as God knows will effectually and certainly persuade the will, and all the following powers, to comply with the proposals of grace, both in the first actual turn of the heart or conversion, as well as in all future good actions: And as he knows it will have this certain effect, so he designs it shall.

" Thus, says he, the will of man is left to enjoy it's own natural freedom, and to chuse or refuse piety and happiness. God, by a knowledge and foresight of all the natures and tempers of men, and all the events of things, and by concurring thus far by the operations of his Spirit of grace, he does that by his grace, which he is certain will issue in the accomplishment of his own gracious designs; and yet he does not make it necessary by any absolute physical influence. He chuses some men to repentance and salvation from the beginning, he forms their natural powers, and he disposes of their providential circumstances in life, so as he foreknows will answer his gracious and eternal purposes; he enlightens their understandings so powerfully by his grace and Spirit, that he, who knows their frame, is certain will finally persuade their wills to comply with the proposals and demands of his gospel. And thus his electing grace obtains it's original design, without constraining the will of man, or intrenching upon the honour of God's moral government.

And to speak yet further in a philosophical sense, " R supposes the will of man to be so free and undeterminable by his other powers, that he does not suppose it to be naturally and necessarily moved in this compliance, even by the light of the mind; but that it feels it self persuaded and overcome in a moral way, by the powerful motives

tives and arguments which are set before the mind, and freely determines it self, and makes choice of the grace of God and salvation *.

And he adds further, "that all these scriptures before-mentioned, which C has alleged, may be sufficiently and happily explained to maintain our own original sinfulness and impotence to all that is good, and to secure the necessity of divine grace; since he acknowledges that without this divine sovereign influence or illumination of the mind, the will of man would never be changed; and that God bestows this light or powerful illumination on the soul, on purpose to produce this divine change on the will; and he foreknows certainly, and designs that it shall produce it, though he does not make it necessary and irresistible. The great God may properly be said to "convert the soul, to change the heart or the will, to regenerate the man, to create a new nature within, and to save a sinner," when he strikes such a supernatural light into the mind, as he certainly knows and intends shall finally prevail over the will by moral influence or persuasion, though not by physical necessity, or any overpowering force, and absolute determination †.

"Thus, says he, divine grace has its complete honour, for it is the first and supreme mover in conversion, and without it no man would repent or turn to God; and hereby also, God has all the honours of his own government, in a moral way, over creatures that are endued with freedom of will to chuse or refuse their own happiness."

If I were to give my sentiments in the matter, I must confess I should like the opinion of R best, in as much as it happily secures and confirms the salvation of such particular persons as God has chosen, without making machines of them; for though R allows the grace of God to enlighten the mind, so far as shall certainly gain a victory over the will, and persuade it to repent, believe, and obey God, yet he supposes the will is left still in it's native freedom, which cannot be constrained, or absolutely and necessarily determined in it's acts or volitions, even by any ideas or perceptions of the mind, and he allows them only the moral force of motives to persuade the will: Thus the full honour of divine government, in all the moral views of it, is sufficiently maintained, as well as the proper freedom or liberty of the will of man; and God bestows salvation finally on those only who are persuaded to repent and accept of it. And herein lies the glory of God's moral government, that distributes rewards or punishments, according as men chuse or refuse good or evil.

But I think there might be a little improvement made to the sentiments of R thus. Is there not a great distinction to be made between the habit, or the principle of holiness in the heart, and the acts or exercises of it in the life? It is certain, there are, or may be, infused habits or principles, as well as acquired ones: As for instance; the apostles had a habit of talking *hebrew* or *syro-chaldaic* as their native language, which was acquired by learning from their childhood; but they had an infused habit or principle of speaking other strange languages, given them by the super-

* See this matter explained more at large, in section v, of an "Essay on the freedom of will both in God and man, in this sixth volume".

† Whereas some call this grace "irresistible," and some prefer the word "insuperable;" R rather chuses to call it "effectual," which is a scriptural term; and "victorious," which is favoured by *Math. x. 21*. "Christ shall bring forth judgment unto victory"; which is interpreted, that he shall bring forth the knowledge of his gospel unto victory over the nations. Or it may be explained, he shall bring forth the judgment of the mind finally to a victory over the will and affections, which is a very near allusion, if not the true interpretation of the place.

supernatural power of God or his Spirit, at the day of *pentecost*, which they exercised immediately with great freedom, as related in *Acts* ii. 4—11.

Now since there may be habits or principles of faith, repentance and holiness, infused or inwrought immediately by divine power and grace, prior to all acts or exercises thereof; why may we not suppose, that besides the principles of light infused into the mind, whereby the judgment is convinced, there is an infused principle of holiness also formed or inwrought in the soul, in a physical or supernatural manner, by the Spirit or grace of God, which may excite and influence the will toward it's acts or volitions, but not constrain it? I mean, why may not the divine power, which formed the soul, give it a propensity or habitual inclination to what is good, like that which *Adam* had the first moment of his creation, though in a lower degree? This is part of the image of God which he had at first, and which is now to be renewed in man: And as this principle was an infused habit in *Adam*, why may it not be so in every true convert now? And further, as this did not necessitate the acts of the will to obedience, even in the day of innocence, so neither doth it now, but only gives it a disposition toward actual repentance and obedience, faith and holiness, at proper occasions: And I think this may very well be called new creation, regeneration, or resurrection from the dead, in the scriptural sense.

I do not see that this concession destroys the moral government of God over man now, any more than it did over *Adam* in his innocence, and especially since all moral government hath it's special regard to the actions wrought by the soul, rather than to the habits or principles which are in it; principles and habits neither are nor can be directly under the command of the will, as all actual volitions or actions are, which are therefore most properly subject to moral regulations.

I think all the rest of R's sentiments may stand just as he has proposed them.

I acknowledge, that there are several texts of scripture, which, in their literal sense, seem to speak the language of C, wherein the ruin of our nature, and it's impotence to all that is good, is set forth in it's strongest light, by the metaphors of blindness, and death in trespasses and sins: And the sovereignty of divine grace is described in it's brightest, and most sovereign and insuperable influences. But still I cannot help querying, as both A and R do, whether this literal sense of those words, this absolute and necessary determination both of the mind and will, and all the powers of man in it's first conversion, and in all future good actions, does not detract too much from God's moral government of the world? And whether all these metaphors and emblems, and bright representations of scripture, may not be sufficiently interpreted in plain language, and their proper sense, according to the explication of the grace of God, and it's efficacious influences, which R has made; especially if we take in the almighty infusion of a supernatural habit of holiness; always remembering that R allows the divine influences on the mind to be so great, as he knows will certainly persuade the will to repent and accept of grace, and designs that it shall have this effect, though not in a way of resistless force and necessity. And why may not this sufficiently answer those scriptures which assert God's "working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure?" *Phil.* ii. 13.

On the other hand, I question whether the opinions of A have ever been easily and plainly reconciled with such a multitude of scriptures, which the followers of C produce in the defence of their opinions concerning divine grace.

However it be, I think the sentiments both of A, C, and R, may, in some tolerable measure, be reconciled to all the six propositions I laid down at first; at least they all declare they design them to be so; though perhaps some of them are more

easily and happily suited to some of these propositions; and others do best consist with the rest of them. Thus much for the first part of this discourse.

“ The second way of reconciliation ”.

A further principle of reconciliation between A, C, and R, is now in my thoughts, and it is this :

Let us enquire whether the sentiments of A, as well as of R and C, do not imply and suppose the certain designation of certain persons to a final salvation ; and consequently whether A has any reason to cast any reproaches upon the doctrine of particular election and special grace, since his own sentiments will lead very nearly to the same doctrine. This will appear by the following steps of enquiry.

1. Doth not A suppose, that the providential transactions of divine power and grace, in the formation of the natural powers of every man, and the disposal of the circumstances of any man's life, under pious parents, or an useful ministry, or occasional conversation, &c. were designed by the great God, as helps and mediums towards the repentance and salvation of those that are saved ?

2. Does not A allow of such operations of grace, by illumination and suasion of the mind and will, as the great God sees to be not only sufficient, but necessary under the present dreadful degeneracy of man, toward the conversion and salvation of those who are saved, even though they proceed no farther than to leave the will of man in a state of balancing indifference, to accept or refuse the offered grace ?

3. Does not A likewise admit these operations of grace to be exerted with a friendly design towards these men, to facilitate their faith and repentance, and make the way plainer and easier towards their salvation ? And does he not grant that God is best pleased, when such a person repents and accepts of his gospel, according to his kind designs ?

4. Does he not also believe, that the blessed God foresees and foreknows that these men, by the free use of their natural powers, thus far assisted by divine grace, will be finally and effectually persuaded to believe, and repent, and be saved ?

5. Has not the blessed God, who knows all his own works from the beginning, designed from eternity to bestow all these advantages on those particular persons, and to carry them on so far, that he foresees their repentance and salvation will be the certain consequences of this his grace, though not the necessary effects of it ?

6. I would ask, whether, if the blessed God gives so much outward and inward grace to certain men, as he foresees and knows will be certainly improved by them to their salvation, and without which they could not repent and be saved, may it not be properly said, that God designs the salvation of these particular persons, that he elects or chuses them unto eternal life *, that he converts and brings them to repentance by his grace, and that he stands justly intitled to their everlasting praises, as the supreme and certain author of their faith and repentance, and salvation ?

In the last place then, may I not enquire, whether or no it be not consistent with A's own opinions in the main, to allow those expressions of scripture their proper force and meaning, which speak of God's “ election of men to salvation, of his chusing them in *Christ Jesus*, of his giving them to *Christ*, of his bestowing faith and repentance upon them, preserving or keeping them by his power unto salvation,” and conducting them safely onward to happiness ? And whether it will not be much more

* May not the words of St. Paul, *Rom. viii. 29.* be perfectly applied to this scheme, “ Whom he foreknew he also did predestinate, &c.”

more natural and easy, to interpret such scriptures concerning the election, conversion and salvation of particular persons, than to put a strain and force upon some of them, and to interpret them only concerning his giving the outward means of grace to a nation or a people, or chusing the heathen nations in general to be acquainted with his salvation, without the application of it to any particular person whatsoever?

I would fain enquire, whether or no, if serious christians are but desirous and inclined to come as near to each other as they can, in their sentiments of divine things, if they are not willing to be reconciled to one another, as far as the present darkneses and difficulties will allow of; I say, whether they may not embrace one another heartily, and unite so far in their sentiments as I have represented? This will take away a thousand cavils and contentions, and a thousand unchristian reproaches, from the lips and pens of those who worship the same God, believe in the same Saviour, hope for the operations of the same blessed Spirit, and desire to ascribe their salvation to the same grace of God, who is blessed for evermore? Amen.

Q U E S T I O N XV.

What is the state and condition of the heathens, who have never heard of the gospel, or have utterly forgot and lost all notices of it?

IT is not to be doubted that the gospel has been twice preached to all mankind; first by *Adam* to his family, which came from the mouth of God, who promised the seed of the woman to become a Saviour; and then by *Noah*, who was a preacher of righteousness, and doubtless of grace also, to his three sons, *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japheth*. Now *Adam* and *Noah* were the fathers of all mankind, before and since the flood: And in the early ages it is evident, that the knowledge of the true God and religion, in some degrees of it, did continue in several families of *Noah's* sons for a considerable time; such as the families of *Melchizedek* king of *Salem*, *Abimelech* king of *Gerar*, *Job* in the land of *Uz*, and his four friends, and many others. And whosoever in following ages retained so much knowledge of God and his promised mercy, as to engage them in repentance of all their sins, in faith or dependence on divine grace, and in new obedience to the will of God, might obtain salvation.

How many or how few these were, and what favourable allowances God might make, and other enquiries relating to this subject, may be found more largely discoursed of in a treatise entitled, "A caveat against infidelity," and in a book called, "The strength and weakness of human reason,"* both published a few years ago. Nor do I know how to explain and determine the questions relating to this subject, in a more conspicuous manner, than those two writings have done it; so that I chuse to ask the favour of my readers to seek their satisfaction in those discourses.

However, concerning the heathens, I may venture to deliver one plain and certain truth, because it is manifestly founded upon scripture; and that is, since the corruption of nature through all mankind is so great and deplorable, since the hope of recovery,

* See Volume II. pages 296—310. and pages 509—515.

covery, by the covenant of grace, hath only those faint and feeble discoveries of it made to the heathens, which the general goodness and long-suffering of God might afford them, and since they have no outward call from the word to repentance and hope, it is evident that the righteous God will inflict but small punishment upon such heathen sinners, in comparison of those who shall fall under the express sentence of damnation, for having neglected or resisted the grace of the gospel, which has been published to them by *Jesus Christ* or the apostles, or by any discoveries of the things of the new testament, in the nations or ages where they have lived. And thus our Lord himself declares, when he denounces his heavy woes against *Cborazin*, *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum*; and asserts, that the punishments of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, shall be tolerable in comparison of those who shall be found sinners against the clear and express publication of the gospel, in the great judgment-day. *Matth. xi. 20—24.*

The testimony of *St. Paul*, *Acts xvii. 30.* seems also to support the same opinion, where he tells us, “that God winked at those times of this ignorance,” wherein the heathen and idolatrous nations lived before the manifestation of the gospel. The word *εἰσέπεισεν* doth not mean that he let them go without punishment, for, *Rom. ii. 9, 12.* “Tribulation and anguish will fall upon every soul that doth evil, whether jew or gentile. Those who have sinned without law, shall perish without law:” But God took but little notice of them with an eye of punishing justice, in comparison of those who shall hear of those solemn calls to repentance which are now given to men by the gospel of *Christ*, and the preaching of the judgment of the world by him. Thus every sinner’s punishment in the other world, shall stand in an exact proportion to the aggravation of the sins they have committed, considered together with the different degrees of light and knowledge they have received. Divine justice will measure out to every one their righteous proportions, with perfect exactness.

Q U E S T I O N X V I .

What will be the state and condition of that large part of mankind who die in infancy, under any of the dispensations of the covenant of grace?

Answer. **I**T is a very large part of mankind, indeed, that dies in the infant state, before they arrive at any capacity to know God or their duty, virtue or vice, and therefore they cannot be charged with actual sin, or rewarded for actual obedience. If we may judge by the yearly bills of mortality *, we find more than a third

* Perhaps it will be said, that the bills of mortality in or near *London*, are no sufficient rule to judge of the deaths of mankind in general, because multitudes of young creatures die there for want of air and conveniences of life. But let it be remembered also, that in the savage nations of *Asia*, *Africa* and *America*, there are more of those young creatures die for want of due care, and for want also of the methods of human skill to relieve the diseases of children, and by this means some of the savage countries are almost depopulated, and the nations destroyed, as travellers inform us. So that take all mankind together, and I am ready to think “the bills of mortality,” in and near *London*, may pretty nearly yield us a just calculation as to this matter.

a third part of the race of man dying before they arrive at two years old, and about half before five: A dreadful devastation of nature! A wide spectacle of ruin, diffused over all nations and ages, by the sin of their common father!

It is true, we cannot tell at what age of life, or at what degrees of growing reason, the great God will appoint children to stand upon their own foot, and will deal with them as rational creatures, as intelligent and free agents, according to their own personal actions and behaviour. Some perhaps shall sooner be adjudged capable and sufficient to act for themselves, and shall be dealt with according to their own moral conduct, and some much later; and both according to their degrees of capacity to "know, to chuse, and to refuse good or evil." But this season is known only to God himself, and the "judge of all the earth will do right." *Gen. xviii. 25.*

In the mean time, while they are deemed infants, and have no personal sin or obedience of their own, but only lie under the sentence of death for the sin of *Adam*, so far as it is imputed to them, let us not send any of their little souls into a separate state of torment, as soon as death has seized their bodies, without an express divine warrant: Nor let us raise up their bodies again from the dead, and then doom them, soul and body, to intense anguish and everlasting fire and sorrow, merely for *Adam's* sin, unless we can find some very evident sentence of this kind passed upon them in the word of God. The equity and the compassion of a God, so far as we can judge of it by the light of reason, would not inflict so severe and eternal a punishment on these little creatures, who are personally innocent or free from actual sin:

And unless we can find some divine revelation that pronounces it with great strength and evidence, let us not so far contradict the gentler dictates of nature and reason, as to assert this opinion for truth, nor impose it on our own belief, nor on the belief of others.

Let us try then, whether we cannot find out some milder punishment for their share of the guilt of *Adam*, in the bible. May we not humbly suppose, that a most wise, most righteous, and most merciful God, will deal with them according to the following principles, derived partly from the scriptures, and partly from the reason of things?

Principle I. As the children of men had all been born innocent and happy, and had worn out their infant-state in innocence and happiness, if *Adam* their father and surety had stood firm in his obedience; so by his fall and disobedience to God, we have already proved that they are all involved with him in so much of his guilt and misery, as that they come into the world with natures corrupted and vitiated, both with the principles of sin and seeds of death. This we have shewn before: And they are exposed hereby to death, that is, to the common and everlasting forfeiture of all those blessings, and all that life and existence, both of soul and body, which God had freely given them: See question XI. section III. of eternal death. And as for the execution of this general sentence, we find it so far executed on children, that they suffer the pains and agonies of mortality, and at last bodily death; though they "have not sinned, that is, personally and actually, after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression," as in *Rom. v. 14.* and there the scripture leaves them, that is, in death and the grave.

Principle II. It has been granted, that the actual and personal sin of *Adam* might provoke his maker so far, as to continue his soul in it's natural immortality after his bodily life was forfeited and finished; and this is because he was a personal and actual sinner: And God may see it divinely proper, that he should suffer long anguish of conscience,

conscience, tribulation and wrath after death, according to the aggravation of his personal crime, that is, upon supposition that he accepted not the covenant of grace: Yet it does not follow, that the great God will punish the mere imputed guilt of his infant-posterity in so severe a manner; or that he will continue their souls in being, whose whole life and being is forfeited by *Adam's* sin, and that he will give them their being and life again, and fix them in an immortal state, merely to make them suffer long anguish and endless misery for the sin of *Adam*. Nor is this severity any where taught us in the word of God; and I am well assured, that our reasonings from the goodness and equity of God will incline us to judge more favourably of his sentence upon infants, and will lead us to the milder and softer side of the question, as I intimated before.

Principle III. There is one very good reason to suppose that the great God will resume the forfeited life and existence of the souls of children as well as of their bodies, and will not continue their immortal spirits to suffer tormenting punishment for ever; because having no personal sin, they can have no anguish of conscience, nor inward vexation: They cannot suffer any self-reproaches for sin, for they have committed none: Nor can this be conveyed to them by any imputed guilt of *Adam*, though it is a very great part of the punishment of souls for actual sin, as being the natural effect of personal transgression and guilt. If therefore they are punished for *Adam's* sin in another world, it must probably be by actual pains and torments inflicted on them by God himself, since the most natural effects of sin, that is, guilt and anguish of conscience, cannot reach them: And is it agreeable to the nature and mercy of a God to inflict such positive and endless pains or torments with his own hand, on such little creatures, who are free from all personal iniquity, and have no other crime but that they were born of *Adam*?

Principle IV. If you should imagine that the mere sense of the loss of God's favour, without any actual inflictions of pain, is all the punishment that children shall suffer in their souls; tell me how that can be without some positive and actual agency of God in it? For unless God, some way or other, give them a sense what his favour is, and what is the loss of it, how can they have this knowledge? And since they have not lived in this world long enough to acquire any ideas of a "God, a creature, a law, obedience and transgression, sin and duty, the favour of God, the loss of his favour, punishment," &c. it is hardly to be supposed, that the blessed God will furnish them with these ideas in a future state of immortality, merely and for no other reason but to make them feel their misery in their eternal loss of the divine favour; and that on no other account, but for having been once born into this world in an unhappy relation to *Adam*, the actual sinner. Those short miseries which end with life, are much more easy to be accounted for upon the foot of divine resentment for *Adam's* sin, than any everlasting pains.

The late learned doctor *Ridgley* indeed, in his discourses of original sin, with modesty and ingenuity has represented this sentiment to the world: And I cannot but declare myself so far of his opinion, that the blessed God will not impress on them these ideas of divine things, nor shew the souls of infants in the other world what are those powers and pleasures which they have lost by *Adam's* sin, on purpose only to torment those little creatures, who never knew what sin was, nor ever sinned against God in their wills, by actual personal disobedience.

But whereas doctor *Ridgley* supposes the immortal existence of such infant-souls in a sort of stupid ignorance or insensibility, which the scripture no where intimates,
I think

I think it is much more natural and reasonable to suppose, that God will deprive both body and soul of life which *Adam* had forfeited for himself and for them, according to the first threatening of death: And since the book of scripture has not revealed it, I cannot find it in the book of reason, nor can I conceive what end it can attain in divine providence, to continue so many millions of infant-souls in an eternal state of stupor: Is it agreeable to the conduct of infinite wisdom, and the government of a God, to maintain such an innumerable multitude of ideots, equal in number to almost all the rest of the human race, in a long endless duration, and to reign over such an immense nation of senseless and thoughtless immortals?

I add yet further, it is very hard to understand how a human soul, which I cannot conceive of but as a thinking being, should exist without any ideas at all, and that for eternal ages. Upon the whole therefore, the state of non-existence, to which we here suppose them to be reduced after death, is much more probable, being the least demerit of imputed sin, or an everlasting forfeiture of life, and a sort of endless punishment without pain.

Principle V. Neither have we any intimations from scripture, that all the bodies of infants will be raised again at the great day, in order to come into judgment: And if we will suffer ourselves to think and judge without prejudice, we may find it highly probable, that there are many thousands of infant-bodies, which will never be restored to life, nor their persons be summoned to judgment in the last great day; and that for these two reasons.

Reason I. We have before shewn, that as bodily death was threatened by the law of innocency or covenant of works to *Adam*, as the head of a numerous race, so this is evidently executed upon all his infant-feed; for "death has reigned over them" in every age, as the punishment of *Adam's* sin, being so far imputed to them; as *Rom. v. 12—14*. But there is no resurrection of the body included in that threatening; nor can we reasonably suppose, that the most gracious God, who has never threatened it, will raise these infant-bodies into an endless life, merely to suffer everlasting anguish and pain in the body, for the imputed sin of their first father, since they have no actual or personal guilt of their own. Mere imputed sin, without actual transgression, is the least and lowest sort of guilt that can be; and therefore it is highly probable, a righteous and merciful God will inflict on them the least and lowest sort of punishment threatened to sin, that is, death in the mildest sense of it, or an universal and eternal destruction of soul and body, which are forfeited by sin.

Reason II. When the resurrection of sinners is mentioned in scripture, it is always that they may be judged expressly "according to their works, according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil." *2 Cor. v. 10*. Now infants have done no works of sin or righteousness: They are not moral agents in the infant-state; and it is not said in scripture, that such shall be brought into judgment. The enquiries and decisions of a judgment-seat are only appointed for actual sinners. See the words of scripture on this subject, *John v. 28, 29*. "The hour is coming, when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they who have done good to the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." *Rev. xx. 12, 13*. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, that is, the high and low, rich and poor,—and they were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up it's dead, and death and hell, or the grave, or the separate state,

gave

gave up their dead, and they were judged, every man according to their works." Observe here, that the words "small and great" must signify persons of high and low degree, who can be judged according to their works; but the word "small" cannot signify infants, because they have no moral works for which they might be judged*.

Principle VI. And indeed, where any future punishments of the other world are represented in scripture, it is always for the actual transgressions of persons who are capable of knowing, chusing and refusing good or evil, which infants are not capable of doing; for the word of God gives us this very character of an infant, *Isai. vii. 16.* viz. that he "knows not to refuse the evil and chuse the good." Let us look into the texts where future judgment and future punishments are described. *Eccles. xi. 9.* "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,—and walk in the ways of thy heart,—but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." and chapter *xii. 14.* It is only visible works of the life, or secret workings of the thoughts, that is, moral actions, "that God will bring into judgment, whether they be good or evil." *Matth. xii. 36.* "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." *Matth. xxv. 41, 42.* "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, for I was a hungered and ye gave me no meat;—I was naked and ye clothed me not, &c. *Rom. ii. 3, 5, 6.* "Thinkest thou, O man, who judgest them which do such things, and dost the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." *2 Cor. v. 10.* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of *Christ*, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or evil." All this refers only to the actual works of men. Nor can I find in the whole book of God, any one syllable of the punishment of infants, either in their souls or bodies after this life; all that the scripture reveals of punishment in a world to come, whether it be in the separate state, or at the resurrection, falls upon those only who have been guilty of actual personal transgressions, and are proper objects of a judgment.

Principle VII. You will ask here, "Is there no resurrection then for the bodies of the infants of good and pious persons, who have repented of their sins, returned to God, and accepted of the covenant of grace in all its extent, for time and eternity? Is there no happy rising-day for the dying children of those parents, who have laid a humble claim to God as their God, and the God of their seed, and have devoted themselves to him according to the language of God's covenant with *Abraham*? Do not these "blessings come upon the gentiles through *Jesus Christ*?" *Gal. iii. 14.* You will ask, whether I myself have not explained the covenant of grace, with the blessings of it, to extend to the children of believers, or good men, under question XII. section VI? And must all these children lie in the grave, and under the power of death for ever? Doth not God's being their God imply their resurrection? Doth "not *Christ* himself prove the resurrection of the dead from this very principle, that
God

* And to confirm this sense of the words "small and great," let it be considered, that in another text of the same writer, these words cannot mean infants and adult, but must signify "poor and rich, or mean and honourable," *Rev. xi. 18.* because they are both said to fear the name of the Lord, which cannot be ascribed to infants.

God is the God of *Abraham*, and *Isaac*," &c. *Luke* xx. 37, 38? And must not such children therefore be raised from the dead?" To this I answer,

Answer. I have allowed this under the twelfth question, and I confirm it all here: For whatever I have said under this last question concerning infants, relates to those only who stand upon the foot of *Adam's* broken covenant of works, and have no interest in a better covenant; that is, it belongs only to the children of wicked men who died in *Adam*, and who have not received or accepted of the covenant of mercy and life through *Jesus Christ*: But the infant-off-spring of those who have repented of sin, and accepted of the covenant of grace, are, in my opinion, included in the blessings of the covenant of *Abraham*, which come upon gentile believers and their seed, as well as on the *Jews* through *Jesus Christ*, in the spiritual and eternal extent of them; for "*Christ* was the minister of the circumcision, or sent to the *Jewish* nation, to confirm the promises of God made unto the fathers, that is, *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and that the gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." See *Gal.* iii. 14. *Rom.* xv. 8. And therefore there is much reason to believe from many places of scripture, that as they have a share in this covenant of grace and the blessings thereof through the faith and piety of their parents, being incapable to put forth an act of faith or piety themselves, so they shall be raised again to an eternal life of holiness and happiness together with their parents, as the sons and daughters of *Abraham* who have God for their God.

Principle VIII. As there are several texts of scripture from which I suppose such inferences may be made, so if I mistake not, there are one or two speeches of the prophets which seem to intend and mean the resurrection and happiness of the children of true christians.

If we look into *Ijai.* lxxv. 23. God is there speaking concerning the blessing which shall come upon his people in the christian church, when those *Jews* who had refused the *Messiah* were cut off, and God calls his own people by another name, that is, christians. The promise is this, "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their off-spring with them." Now we find by experience in all ages of the christian church, that infants die, as well as they did before; and yet it is said, "Their parents shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble:" How can this be fulfilled, but by the right of their children to the extensive blessings of the covenant of grace, that is, a resurrection to eternal life? And it is put upon this foot, that "they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, they enjoy the blessing of their father *Abraham* in whom all nations are blessed, that God is their God and the God of their off-spring together with them."

The other text is, *Jer.* xxxi. 15. compared with *Matth.* ii. 17. where the prophet *Jeremy* is cited; "A voice was heard in *Rama*, lamentation and bitter weeping; *Rachel* weeping for her children refused to be comforted, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping and thy eyes from tears: Thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy; and there is hope in thy end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." Though this prophecy might have some sort of accomplishment at the captivity of the children of *Benjamin* the son of *Rachel* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the restoration of their posterity by *Cyrus*, yet it seems more literally, plainly and expressly to be fulfilled by the slaughter of the infants in *Bethlehem* near *Rama*, as *St. Matthew* explains it, and by their return from the land of

the last enemy, death, and their standing in their own border, that is, in the heavenly *Canaan*, where their parents considered in prophecy as true *israelites*, have obtained the promised inheritance: And thus the mother's travel, in bearing the children, as well as her work of faith and prayer for her children, shall be rewarded by beholding them return from the land of death, their common enemy, and placed together with themselves in the heavenly paradise, which is their border or portion.

It is therefore only the children of wicked parents concerning whom I suppose the wisdom, justice and mercy of God will join to destroy them entirely by death, or to resume the forfeited life of soul and body.

It seems evident to me, that though there are some hints and reasonable hopes of the happy resurrection of the off-spring of good men to be derived from scripture, yet all other children in this world are also brought down to death for the sin of *Adam* by the word of God, and they are left in death: But neither reason nor scripture, so far as I can find, provides any happiness or unhappiness, any reward or punishment for them in a world to come; and how can we go further than reason or scripture will lead us?

And if I may freely speak my own sentiments here, I would say, since neither reason nor scripture, certainly and plainly teach us any thing concerning the souls of the infants of wicked men after death; and if I must not leave them in a state of non-existence, I would much rather chuse to suppose them at the death of the body entered into a new and personal state of trial, than I would condemn them to a wretched resurrection and eternal misery for nothing else, but because they were born of *Adam*, the original transgressor.

This is only a comparative thought by the way. But to pursue and support my present scheme of their annihilation at death, I must answer two or three objections following.

Principle IX. Against this hypothesis it will be perhaps objected, first, of what use can it be for the great God to bring so many thousand souls of the children of wicked parents into being, to destroy them so soon?

Answer I. Who can tell me of what use it can be for God to create so many millions of animated beings in the sea, or in the woods and deserts for so short a continuance? Who can tell why he should exert his almighty power to produce so many myriads of fishes which man never sees, and insects, engines of curious and divine artifice, of which millions are brought forth in one day, which are never seen of men, and which in a few weeks or months perish again, and are lost for ever? It is as easy with omnipotence to create souls as bodies, or to make men as worms: And it is the illustrious and unconceivable magnificence of his government, that he can produce worlds of such wonderful creatures and destroy them without any loss, though he should never acquaint us with any of his reasons or purposes for this conduct. Why must such sorry creatures as men are, be acquainted with the designs and reasons of every thing that a God thinks fit to do?

Answer II. Though the purposes and ends of the great God are far above our reach; yet we may suppose God to have this wise design in the creation and destruction of so many children, viz. to let those wicked parents, as well as their neighbours, see the constant evil of sin in the effects or punishment thereof, even of the sin of *Adam* in the weaknesses and pains and death of their children; and to keep a lively image of these things always before the eyes of men, in the continual succession of so many visible agonies and dying groans and deaths of mankind in their youngest hours

hours of life. This same design and effect is attained also by the mortality and deaths of all children, even those of pious parents, whose souls are carried to heaven by the covenant of grace and the faith of their parents. God will have a continual sense of the evil of this original sin maintained in all the families of mankind, and this is a sufficient reason for his conduct.

Principle X. Let me now mention a second objection against this set of thoughts concerning infants; and that is, if the children of wicked parents do not rise from the dead, but are destroyed soul and body, as lying under the original sentence of death, will not this opinion tempt parents to be negligent of the lives of their infants? And some perhaps might be tempted to put them to death, that they may not grow up to sin, and thereby expose themselves to eternal misery. I answer,

Answer. That good persons cannot be guilty of this crime; for such wilful and inhuman murder would be a plain proof they had no true religion nor goodness nor interest in the covenant of grace: Nor can they have any such temptation if they walk according to this covenant, because the blessings of the covenant of grace are secured to their seed. As for wicked parents, they have so much natural love and concern for the welfare of their children in this life, and so little regard to any thing of a future world, that there is no great danger of this event. The ties of nature and parental affection in the men of the world are generally much stronger than any thing else that relates to another world. There are many of the wicked among men, who actually believe that children have no future state, and yet we do not find this temptation prevail.

But further, Can we suppose any person can be so mad and inconsistent as to fear the future uncertain danger of God's wrath for a child, if he has no fear of it for himself? Or will he run himself into certain present damnation if he die under such an impious and inhuman sin of wilful murder, in order to secure a child from the future uncertain danger of impenitence and damnation, that is, if it live to man's estate and grow wicked? This is so unnatural a temptation, especially to wicked parents who have little regard to future and eternal things, that if the representation which I have made of the case of infants, be agreeable to reason and scripture, I think the danger of such a supposed possible inconvenience is so small, as is by no means sufficient to refute this scheme of thoughts, or to forbid the publication of it.

Principle XI. I should here also take notice that there is a third objection against my hypothesis; and that is, there have been some persons who suppose we have no need of this annihilating scheme concerning the case of infants, to mollify the severity of it, since in their opinion, one half of the fifth chapter to the *Romans* represents our Lord *Jesus Christ* as removing entirely all the guilt of the sin of *Adam* from mankind, and that the misery and destruction that was brought on the race of mankind, by the fall of their first parents, is effectually cancelled and abolished by the obedience and death of the Son of God, excepting only their sickness and natural death of their bodies, which infants are subject to as well as grown persons. But to this I answer,

Answer. The design of that chapter is to shew, that God has laid as sufficient and solid a foundation in the obedience and death of *Christ* for the recovery of men from the ruins of their nature, their guilt and misery, in and by the covenant of grace, as *Adam* had laid for the ruin and destruction of his posterity according to the cove-

nant of works : But as none but the posterity of *Adam* are involved in his curse, so the blessing is only applied there to those who become the seed and posterity of *Christ* by faith and repentance, and by accepting the covenant of grace : for it is sufficiently evident from constant experience and observation in opposition to this opinion, that sin and pain and death, which were brought in by the fall of *Adam*, still infect human nature in every son and daughter of man which comes into the world : and how can these evident consequents and legal penalties of sin continue among infants, if all the guilt and consequent effects of *Adam's* sin be taken away from them by the undertaking of *Christ*? Our daily and constant experience abundantly proves that this opinion of the universal and actual abolition of sin, and the curse brought in by *Adam* on his infant race must be a mere mistake.

Principle XII. And if it should be said still, that this recovery of mankind from the curse by *Jesus Christ*, so far as it belongs to infants, chiefly refers to their future state after death, and that it ensures salvation universally to all who die in infancy ; I might very well answer,

Answer I. That neither do the words of that place of scripture, nor does its connexion with the context discover this doctrine there ; and I think it would be very hard to prove it without some clearer testimony of scripture. Besides,

Answer II. If we consult the word of God from one end to the other of it, we shall find no blessing or curse coming upon children in their very infancy, but by the covenant or conduct or character of their parents. If the children of *Adam* die, they are doomed to death together with him. *Rom. v. 12—21*. If *Abraham's* seed are blessed, it is together with their father. *Gen. xvii. 7—14*. If the unbelieving *Jews* are the branches broken off from the good olive-tree, their little buds are broken off together with them ; and if the believing gentiles are grafted into it, their buds or tender offspring are grafted in together with them also. *Rom. xi. 17—24*. The scripture gives us no account of God's dealing with children in their infancy, but as a part of their parents, and considered as one with them. Now how shall the children of wicked men, according to the current of scripture, be brought into this salvation by *Christ*, if their parents do not accept nor share in this salvation? In the third place,

Answer III. I would enquire whether this opinion that all infants are saved, doth not much more directly and abundantly expose children to the inconvenience of the foregoing objection, viz. by tempting wicked parents to send them to heaven, either by neglecting or destroying their lives upon earth, in order to convey them to certain happiness. A wicked man, or woman, who has never so many children, will be tempted upon this foot to say, why should I take any care of these children, let them come into the world as fast as they will, and let them die as fast as they come ; there are so many more inhabitants of heaven ; and why should I nurse them up in life merely to bring them into the danger of hell? Is not this a temptation much greater than that of sending them into non-existence?

Answer IV. I add in the last place, that if all children, dying in infancy, are certainly saved, what are the special privileges which are so often asserted in scripture to belong to the children of pious parents and the seed of *Abraham*, in having God to be their God? Does not this sufficiently intimate some superior favour to the children of good men, who have accepted the covenant of grace in *Christ Jesus*, above what is promised to the children of the wicked, who have broken the covenant of works, and who have no share in the blessings of the covenant of grace for themselves or their posterity, because they have not accepted of it? Has the offspring of the righ-

teous

teous no advantage of the wicked after all these gracious words of promise? I fear such an opinion does not bear a kind aspect on the faithfulness of God in his word, to represent and promise that as a peculiar kindness and grace to the children of good men, which equally belongs to all, even the most impious and wicked.

Upon the whole, the opinion of the salvation of all children, as it has no countenance from the bible, so it has no foundation in the reason of things; and the scheme of the transactions of God with men, as represented in scripture, appears much more consistent and uniform according to the hypothesis I have here proposed.

Yet if any of my readers are utterly averse to these sentiments, let them find out wherein I have run counter to the word of God. The scripture brings down the infants of wicked parents to the grave, and leaves them there, and so do I: The scripture has not provided any resurrection for them, neither can I do it. And, in matters of pure revelation, though we may propose an expedient to solve great difficulties, yet I would be always cautious of asserting what God has not revealed.

Conclusion; or the advantages of this whole scheme.

THUS I have endeavoured to trace out, so far as my reason would assist me, what relief may be given to some of those doctrines of revelation which seem to have a harsh sound, or a painful and disagreeable appearance in them, and which might seem to lay any imputation upon the conduct of God and providence. It is and must be confessed there are some difficulties which attend the doctrine of original sin and misery spreading over all the race of man, and the doctrine of the saving grace of God in *Christ Jesus* providing a way of recovery for a lost world, even for all that are willing to accept it, and yet at the same time securing some certain success to the undertaking of *Christ* in the salvation of those whom the Father hath given him. And yet all these seem to be doctrines pretty plainly taught in the holy scriptures: Nor are they mere opinions for speculation, but they have a great and important influence upon our practice.

If we are well persuaded of original sin, and that our natures are so corrupt and degenerate, we shall learn to lie humble before a God of majesty and holiness, which is the very first part of all our religion. We shall also be candid and meek and compassionate towards each other without pride or scorn, being all liable to the same mistakes and infirmities, the same passions and miseries, and being all involved in the same condemnation and degeneracy.

And if we shall find that the doctrine of the imputed sin of *Adam* is so far from being a difficulty or hardship in this article, that it is the only effectual way to solve the propagation of the universal corruption and misery of our natures, and to absolve the conduct of God from all blame, we shall raise no more murmuring cavils against the providence of God herein, but receive it in the light in which the scripture seems to have represented it with all submission and silence. God is just, though man be sinful and miserable.

If

If we are made deeply sensible of our universal guilt and degeneracy in *Adam*, we shall thankfully rejoice in every discovery of divine mercy, and especially in the gospel of *Jesus Christ*, who is the second *Adam*, and the only appointed way of our salvation: We shall be more prepared to receive it with greater humility, gratitude and joy, when we see our souls so utterly lost and undone in a state of nature: And we shall depend more intirely upon the grace of God the Father, and his Son *Jesus*, and the influences of the blessed Spirit, for every part of our restoration and recovery.

All the doctrines of the special grace of God, of the redemption of *Christ*, and of the sanctifying Spirit, lie much more easy and obvious before the eye, when we are made deeply sensible of our universal ruin and misery. That humble temper of soul which this doctrine requires, will more readily subdue all the rising cavils of the mind against the methods of saving mercy.

If we believe that the undertaking of *Christ* is secured of success, and that multitudes of souls shall certainly obtain this salvation, this is matter of thankfulness and hope, since all mankind lay in one common ruin: And we have encouragement to all diligence in the duties of repentance, faith and new obedience, since "he that seeks shall find, and to him that knocks it shall be opened," *Matth. vii. 8.* and since this is the only way for us to obtain our share in the success of the labours and sufferings of *Christ*, and the blessings that are derived from them. And when we have found our own hearts sincerely and effectually turned to God by the gospel, and our natures and our lives formed unto holiness, we have then high encouragement to believe the security of our interest in the mediation of *Christ* and the salvation of the gospel, and to rejoice in hope.

And if we take with us also this comprehensive and compassionate doctrine of the sincere and extensive offers of mercy to every sinner, according to the degree of the discoveries of the grace of God in the age and nation wherein he lives, we shall acquire a more large, more generous and diffusive benevolence to all our fellow-creatures of the race of *Adam*: We shall give a large foundation for hope to every guilty creature among mankind, assuring them that the great God hath debarred none from his mercy but those who debar themselves by impenitence and unbelief. We shall vindicate the goodness and justice of God in his dispensations towards men, and leave the final condemnation of wilful impenitents, and of all the wicked of the earth, intirely upon their own heads.

If it be enquired, what farther advantages can be derived from so peculiar a doctrine as this last section contains, viz. that the "children of unregenerate or unholy parents, who never lived to do good or evil, and died only under the guilt of *Adam's* sin, have sustained their whole penalty at death, and will never be raised to life again?" I answer, in these three particulars.

Answer I. Hereby the conduct of divine providence, with regard to the millions of infant-creatures in all the numerous nations of the earth, will be justified from the severe censures which have been cast upon it by men in accusing the doctrine of original sin: For if they suffer nothing but temporal death, as being fallen in *Adam* their head, all these terrors of pretended cruelty and severity will vanish, while it appears that eternal damnation belongs only to those who have been guilty of actual transgression in their own persons; for there is not one word in all the scripture concerning eternal misery inflicted upon any person merely for the sin of *Adam*.

Answer II. This hypothesis not only absolves the providence of God from supposed cruelty, but perhaps it represents it as good and gracious towards far the greatest part of

of those that are born of *Adam*; while they are not suffered to live and grow up amidst the temptations of this world, and under their present corrupt principles of nature, but are precluded from rendering themselves more miserable, by being cut off in infancy, and never having it in their power to do good or evil themselves.

Answer III. This scheme relieves the difficulties which sometimes have been cast upon the laws or orders of God given the *jewish* nation, to cut off so many thousand children of the *Canaanites* when they entered into the promised land: For hereby these children are subjected only to temporal death as the consequent and penalty of *Adam's* sin, and are, if I may so express it, secured from eternal misery, by being prevented from growing up to imitate the iniquities of their fathers, and to expose themselves to God's eternal judgment and damnation.

If some person should again object, why then may not men slay their own infants or any other children out of kindness, to prevent their growing up to commit actual sins, and exposing themselves to a resurrection and judgment and everlasting misery? I answer, these two ways.

Answer I. Because this is directly contrary to the moral law whereby God hath appointed to govern man, viz. "thou shalt not kill;" and the laws of men, as well as the law of God, almost universally forbid all murder of the human race, and require blood for blood. It is God's prerogative to cut off by death whom he pleases, but he hath not given this prerogative to man, nor will he break in upon the grand rule of his government of this world, so far as to give this piece of sovereignty out of his own hand.

Answer II. Because if men might slay any children at their own pleasure, they might slay some who would have grown up to virtue and religion, and then this infant-murder would cut these children off from future and eternal happiness, which would have been very unjust, and which God will never permit.

Upon the whole it is evident, that the scripture having never in any text that I can find foretold the resurrection or judgment of the infants of sinful parents, and having pronounced the word death only, as the penalty of *Adam's* sin or their interest in it, and denounced the final judgment and eternal misery only against actual sinners; there is abundant reason to believe that God has knowingly and wisely appointed and ordered all these things, so that his providence might be secure from all charges of cruelty and injustice: And perhaps this hypothesis which I have here proposed, is nothing else but these very appointments and transactions of God set in their proper scriptural light to guard his providence from censure.

If I have failed in these attempts, let it be remembered that all the new or peculiar sentiments which are found here, are merely offered to the world as probable conjectures drawn from reason and scripture, to relieve the difficulties which seem to hang on revealed truths. If the method proposed is not sufficient for this purpose, I shall rejoice to see better solutions of them given, and to behold them set in a fairer light. Where I have laboured to follow the track of reason, it hath only been in order to do more abundant honour to divine revelation, to which I intirely submit my faith and practice; and I solemnly renounce whatsoever is inconsistent with it, for that cannot be right reason.

And let us remember also, that if all our attempts of this kind should fail, yet we may rest assured of this, that God is ever wise and righteous and good, that all his transactions with men, how intricate and repugnant soever they may seem to us, are

are highly consistent in his own view, and harmonize with all his own perfections: We may be assured that we are sinful and unhappy creatures in ourselves, that there is an all-sufficient salvation provided through *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, and that every one shall certainly be a joyful partaker of it, who follows the appointed methods of divine grace. True repentance and a sincere return to God, with faith in his mercy, so far as it is discovered to men under every dispensation, and a persevering life of holiness in the love of God and our neighbour, shall not fail of being crowned at last with the favour of God and eternal life through the mediation of *Jesus Christ* our Lord: And whatsoever clouds of ignorance and darkness may continue to surround us here, while we are studying the mysteries of grace or providence, yet we shall see things hereafter in a divine light, where all difficulties and darkness shall vanish for ever.

T H R E E

T H R E E

E S S A Y S

Added by way of

A P P E N D I X :

Wherein are contained

Some plain REPRESENTATIONS of important points relating to the foregoing QUESTIONS.

- I. A debate, whether the present miseries of man, when considered alone, and distinct from his sins, will prove his early apostasy from God?
- II. A plain and easy explication of the doctrine of imputed sin and imputed righteousness.
- III. On the guilt and defilement of sin, and how far they may be transferred to others.

T H E
F I R S T E S S A Y.

A debate, whether the present miseries of man alone will
prove his apostasy from God ?

S E C T I O N I.

The follies and miseries of mankind in a general survey.

TH E miseries and follies of the creature man have been an ancient and endless subject of declamation among the writers of the heathen world, as well as among christians. A just survey of human nature, from it's entrance into life, till it's retirement from this visible world behind the curtain of death, would furnish us with abundant matter of sorrow and complaint; and we should be ready to say concerning man, "Is this the creature that is so superior to the rest of the inhabitants of this globe, as to require such peculiar care of the creator in forming him? Is this the animal furnished with such transcendent powers of thought and reason, whereby he is said to be exalted above brute-animals? Does he deserve such an illustrious description as *Ovid* gives of him, after he had described the formation of beasts, birds and fishes?"

" Sanctius his animal, mentisque capacius altæ
Deerat adhuc, & quod dominari in cætera possêt,
Natus homo est. Sive hunc divino semine cretum
Ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo,
Finxit in effigiem moderantùm cuncta deorum:
Pronaque cum spectent animalia cætera terram
Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit, & erectos ad sidera tollere vultus."

Thus in english.

" A creature of a more exalted kind,
Was wanting yet, and then was man design'd;

T t 2

Confucius

Conscious of thought, of more capacious breast,
 For empire form'd, and fit to rule the rest.
 Whether with particles of heavenly fire
 The God of nature did his soul inspire,
 And borrowing from our earth, on that blest day,
 Our new-made earth, a better sort of clay,
 And moulding up the mass in shape like our's,
 Form'd a bright image of th' all-ruling powers.
 Whilst all the mute creation downwards bend
 Their sight, and to their earthy mother tend,
 Man looks aloft; and with erected eyes
 Beholds his own hereditary skies."

One would almost imagine this heathen poet had read the account which *Moses* the *Jewish* historian gives of the original formation of man, *Gen.* i. 26. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish, and the fowl, and the cattle." And chapter ii. 7. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

If man was formed in the image of God, certainly he was a holy and a happy being; but what is there like holiness or happiness now found running through the rank of creatures that is called by the name of MAN? Are there any of the brutal kind that do not more regularly answer the design of their creation, and act more agreeably to their nature, than this illustrious thing MAN, that was made to govern them all? Are there any of the brutes of the land, the water or the air, that we ever find acting so much below their original character as mankind does? And are there any tribes amongst them, through which pain, vexation and misery are so plentifully distributed as among the sons and daughters of the first man?

This globe of earth, if it were to be surveyed by some spirit, some immortal being of the superior regions, and ransacked through all the dimensions and corners of it which are inhabited by our species of creatures, it would be found such a theatre of folly and madness, such a maze of mingled vice and misery, as would move the compassion of his refined nature to a painful degree, and almost sink it into sympathy and sorrow, if it were not tempered and restrained by a clear sight of the just and wise conduct of providence, in permitting all this mischief. But if all these wide and dismal scenes could be grasped in one view, by any mortal of a tender and compassionate make, perhaps it would agonize his better powers into confusion and phrenzy. Should the poets or philosophers form a just idea of it, as far as our common capacities extend, there would be criminal and absurd matter enough to furnish a *Horace* or a *Juvenal* with a thousand jests and sarcasms on their own species, or rather with a thousand full satires. There would be follies enough to shake the lungs of a thousand *Democritus*'s with endless laughter, and there would be miseries enough to raise a fountain of tears for each single *Heraclitus*, if such a one had lived in every city of the universe, and in every age of man since the first creation.

S E C T I O N II.

A particular view of the miseries of man.

BUT we will lay aside the sins and follies of mankind, and only take his miseries into our present view; let us see whether from them alone we cannot infer, that we are a very degenerate race of beings, with most evident marks of the displeasure of our maker upon us, and under the punishment of the wise and righteous governor of all things*.

Let us take a turn amongst the historians of the world; and what is almost all history but a description of the wretchedness of mankind, under the mischiefs they bring upon themselves, and the judgments of the great God? The scenes of happiness and peace are very thin set among all the nations, and they have had rather a transient glimpse of these bright scenes here and there appearing and vanishing, than any pretences to durable felicity. Let us spread our thoughts over the universe, what public desolations by plague and famine, by storms and earthquakes, by wars and pestilence, which strike and affect our ears continually: Even the report is terrible. What secret mischiefs reign among men, which pierce into the soul, and corrode the vitals of nature? What smarting wounds and bruises, what lingering diseases attack and torment the animal frame?

Surely those who sustain these maladies would not suppose our great poet had exaggerated matters when he describes them thus, as set before *Adam* our forefather by the angel *Raphael*:

“ A lazarus-house it seem'd wherein were laid:
 Numbers of all diseases, all maladies
 Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
 Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
 Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
 Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,
 Demoniac phrenzy, mooping melancholy,
 And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
 Consumption and wide-wasting pestilence,
 Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
 Dire was the tossing, deep the groans, despair
 Tended the sick, busy from couch to couch;
 And over them triumphant death his dart
 Shook, but delay'd to strike, though oft invoc'd.”

But lazarus-houses are not the only places whereby we may judge of the numbers of the wretched. Where is the family, if there are seven or eight persons in it, who rein

* I hope the reader will forgive a short repetition of some of the same thoughts which may be found under the first question in this book; for it was hardly possible to avoid them; especially considering, that these two discourses were written with a distinct view, and were not at first designed to be published in the same book.

wherein there is not one or other of them afflicted with some troublesome malady, or some tiresome weakness or inconvenience? These indeed are often-times wisely concealed by the persons who suffer them, and by the families where they dwell. But these are the miseries which are discovered, in a glaring light, in the hospitals, the infirmaries, and the bedlams, which are provided by the public for the poor: And if we were to walk round a nation, we should find perhaps that in every twenty or thirty households, there were some afflicted and miserable creatures, that would be fit company for these public monuments of unhappiness, if their private circumstances did not extend to make provision for their support and relief; and in the whole, they would be enough to make half a province in a nation, rather than a town or a village.

Let us proceed a little in this enquiry. What toils and hardships, what dangers and deaths, what inward anxieties and sorrows, disappointments and calamities, are diffused and scattered through every age and country of mankind? Do not the rich feel them as well as the poor, and the prince together with the peasant? Are they not all teized with their own restless and tormenting appetites which are never satisfied, but are still returning upon them, and their impetuous passions give them no rest? What keen anguish of mind arises from pride, and envy, and resentment? What tortures and racking disquietudes do disappointments in ambition, or love, and wild jealousy, infuse into the bosoms of the rich, while the poor, together with these same inward vexations and corroding maladies of the mind, sustain also endless drudgeries in procuring their daily and common subsistence? And how are many of them half-starved in their sorry cottages, or fed and nourished at a miserable rate?

Let us survey this sorry creature MAN through every stage: First, mark what a wretched figure he makes at his entrance into life. This animal, says *Pliny*, "who is to govern the rest of creatures round him, how he lies bound hand and foot, all in tears, and begins his life in misery and punishment; and for this only reason, because he is born." Thus, that *roman* author, in his preface to one of his writings.

If we trace the education of the human race, from the cradle to the state of mature age, and especially among the poor, which are the bulk of all nations, the wretchedness of mankind will appear still in a mournful light. How are they dragged up in their tender age in *Europe, Asia, Africa, and America*, through a long train of nonsense, madness, and miseries? What millions of uneasy sensations doth their infancy and childhood endure by reason of those pains and pressing necessities which in their youngest years they can tell only in cries and groans, and which their parents in extreme poverty cannot relieve, or they are so brutish and savage that they will not do it? How wretchedly are these young generations hurried onward through the folly and weakness of childhood, under these miseries, till the addition of new calamities, from their own crimes and madnesses, their ungoverned appetites and passions, swells the load to a huge and painful degree? They practise what they have seen with their fathers, and are plunged into early mischief.

As youth advances, the ferments of the blood rise higher, and the appetites and the passions become much stronger, and give more abundant vexation to the race of mankind, than they do to any of the young brutal creation, whether in air, earth or sea. Their natural appetites are abundantly relieved and satisfied without those vexing cares, anxieties and inconveniences, which beset mankind of both sexes in the same part of life. The same desires and inclinations which belong to the rest of the

the animal kind, attack the human race also, but with greater rage and violence, and seem to demand their present gratification: And that, as has been observed by moralists, not at one season of the year only, but at all seasons, with more constancy than in other creatures, and give the younger crouds of mankind many more disturbances.

The all-wise God the creator, for just and kind designs and reasons, has limited the gratification of these appetites by rules of virtue and piety: But perhaps these very rules and confinements, however holy, just and good, have served very much through the corruption of our nature, to irritate and provoke mankind to greater excesses, and pursue their vitiated animal inclinations with warmer violence than ever man would have been exposed to in the days of innocence. So the heathen writers confess:

“ Nitimur in vetitum semper, cupimusque negata. ”

“ We are ever desiring forbidden things, and press after unlawful delights. ” So St. Paul acknowledges, *Rom. vii. 8.* “ Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. ” So a wild young bull or a lion would beat themselves against the grates and restraining bars of their prison, and make more furious assaults there to gain their full freedom. And in the midst of these distracting circumstances of mankind, between the law of God and their own appetites, they lead sometimes but a miserable and most unquiet life.

If their inclinations are gratified in an unlawful manner, what anguish of conscience, what inward vexations and keen reflexions of mind perpetually haunt and torment them! What terrible and pressing temptations assault them to conceal their shame, by the murder of themselves, or the harmless babes to whom they gave birth and life! How shameful and hateful are the scenes of life into which they bring their wretched off-spring? How innumerable and grievous the inconveniences which they entail upon their young spurious descendants? What lasting reproach and distress, with beggary and long sorrow?

Or, if they pursue their desires in a lawful manner, how unhappy are the bulk of the extreme poor? And yet how many thousands are there that are but just capable of providing food and raiment for themselves in the world, who, after some conflict with these restless inclinations, rush into the connubial state and misery at once? How unable are they to provide the same necessaries for a young nursery of mortals, a new increasing generation? What endless sollicitudes, night and day, afflict them in their contrivances to support themselves and their infant-brood? And what a length of years is it before these young helpless creatures can possibly release their parents from this care and anxiety, and are capable of providing food and raiment for themselves? Would the affairs of human life in infancy, childhood, and youth, have ever been constituted in such a sore and painful situation, if man had been such a being as God at first made him; and if he had always stood obedient to his maker, and continued in his favour? Could divine wisdom and goodness admit of these scenes, if there had not been some great and universal degeneracy spread over all the race, which, by the wise and righteous permission of God, exerts itself some way or other in every stage of life?

If we follow this track which mankind treads to the perfection of manhood, the age of public appearance and activity upon the stage of the world, what shall we find there but infinite cares, labours and toil, attended with fond hopes almost always frustrated

frustrated, warm wishes scarce ever fulfilled, endless crosses and disappointments, through ten thousand accidents that are every moment flying across this mortal stage; and whatever their pursuits be, whether honour or wealth, ease or pleasure, some intervening incidents or oppositions blast all their designs, and plunge them into long vexation. As for the poor, who have no such pursuits, but seek their bread from day to day, how does the sultry toil exhaust their lives in summer, and what pinching starving wretchedness do they feel among wintry snows and storms? How is a miserable and distressed life sustained among all the fatigues and pains of nature, the oppression, cruelty and scorn of the rich, and their own inbred maladies both of body and mind, as I said before?

Let us follow on the track of this sorry life, and enter into the scenes of old and decrepid age; how innumerable and how inexpressible are the disasters and sorrows, the groans and aches, the pains and wretchednesses that spring up every where to meet this poor long-lived animal on the borders of the grave, before they plunge him into it?

And indeed is there any person upon earth, high or low, without such distresses and difficulties, such crossing accidents and perplexing cares, such troubles, such painful infirmities, such disquieting fears, anxieties and sorrows, in some or other stage of life, as must pronounce mankind upon the whole a miserable being? Whatsoever scenes of happiness seem to attend him in any shining hour, there is a dark cloud that suddenly casts a gloom over them, and the pleasing vision vanishes as a dream.

And after all these sufferings of real sorrow, and these painted delusions of joy, how constant is the tyranny of death in it's ravages, through our whole race? How formidable and painful are the avenues to his dark dominion? How full of terror and darkness, of thorns and briars, and of extreme anguish, is our descent to the grave? The distresses and miseries of our course through this life, as well as the entrance into it, and the departure out of it, are so numerous and so mournful among all our race, that we can only say, "he is the happiest of men who has the fewest of them." But even the fewest miseries that any man has, if put into an equal balance, perhaps would outweigh all the real and solid comforts of his present life put together, if it were utterly abstracted from all future hopes. And does mankind now look like a creature in favour with his maker? Or has he not rather evident marks upon him of the great displeasure of the God that created him?

Perhaps some will cry out here, in direct opposition to this sentiment, that notwithstanding all these scenes of misery which are opened and spread abroad in the world, yet still the greatest part of men live comfortably enough, and with tolerable satisfaction, according to the condition and rank of their natures on this globe of earth. Are there not a thousand delights and satisfactions still found among mankind in every age and nation? How sweet and relishing are the pleasures of daily food to satisfy appetite, and to repair nature, and all the rich variety of fruits to refresh us, and of drinks to quench our thirst? Is it not sweet sleep that renews our vigour, and gives ease to our weary limbs and spirits? What is the delightful conversation of friends, and the mutual blessings of love and friendship, of advice, comfort and assistance from our natural kindred and our neighbours? Do not these render human life among the bulk of mankind tolerable and easy, if not a chosen and a desirable good?

In answer to this: Let us enquire a little, what are these boasted pleasures which are supposed to recompence the sorrows of life, and give the balance to happiness in this present state? Are they not most of them owing to some previous pain or uneasiness?

uneasiness? It is the pain of hunger and thirst that makes food and drink so relishing: It is the pain of weariness or grief that renders sleep so refreshing. And as for the blessings of love and friendship, among neighbours and kindred, &c. do they not very often, and for the most part, produce as much or more vexing disquietude than they do satisfaction and peace? I mean, they produce these evils, not in and of themselves, and by the original nature of things, but by reason of the endless humours and follies, the errors and passions of sinful fallen mankind, who enjoy and abuse these blessings.

Again, are not a very great part of these pleasures owing to such an indulgence of appetites and sensible satisfactions, which by the corrupt and evil bias of our natures become dangerous and fatal temptations to draw us into guilt and folly, into intemperance and shame, into painful anguish of conscience and bitter self-reflexion? And do not these very pleasures of the body prove the ruin of ten thousand souls? These pleasures might be used indeed with innocence and wisdom; but the unruly and vicious appetites and passions of men turn these sensual delights more frequently into a curse, which God in his original creation designed for blessings: I say, God the creator at first designed them so; but if you take them now with all these unhappy temptations, these powerful and mischievous influences, which by the folly and guilt of man are attached to them, they do not much look like the pleasures provided by a God for his innocent creature man: Scarce can they be called absolutely blessings, unless our natures were better suited to make use of them without such perpetual and prevailing danger and guilt.

Think again, how short and transient are the pleasures of life in comparison of the pains of it? How vanishing the sweetest sensations of delight? And in many families and persons, how long and durable the days, the months, the years of fatigue or pain, or bitter sorrow? How small is the proportion of sensible pleasure to that of trouble, or pain, or uneasiness? And how far is it over-balanced by the maladies, or miseries, the fears or sorrows of life, among the greatest part of mankind?

And as for intellectual pleasures, how very few are there in this world who take satisfaction in them? And among those few how many contentions and quarrels? How many crossing objections, bewildered enquiries, unhappy mistakes and errors, as well as fatigues and vexations, are mingled even with intellectual enjoyments here on earth? "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow," saith the wisest of men; *Eccles. i. 18.* and upon the whole computation he calls it, "vanity and vexation of spirit." chapter ii. 17.

And if we should add to all these evils, this most unhappy circumstance which belongs to every natural man who grows up in this world, viz. the great hazard of his living in sin and rebellion against his maker in the world, and of being sent down to long misery, as a just punishment for it in another; this seems to increase the wretched condition of mankind in this present state to such a degree, that words cannot express it, nor heart conceive. Say now, does mankind, coming into the world in this view, look like an innocent tribe of creatures, or in the original state of favour with their maker?

To talk of solid comfort and satisfaction, and real happiness to be enjoyed in this life, is contrary to all the common sense and experience of almost every thoughtful man who has taken a just survey of these numerous scenes of evil. Sorry satisfaction indeed, and poor comfort in the midst of such superior miseries!

If a man were placed in some upper region, and had the wisdom of an angel, with all that just knowledge and experience what true happiness is, and could look down from above, and take a complete survey of human life, even in it's best circumstances,

cumstances, as things now stand, and as it is supposed to be enjoyed by some of the happiest men on earth, without the hopes of a better life afterwards, he would be very loth to accept of it; nor indeed would it be worth his acceptance.

Is there an angel in heaven who would not rather chuse to lose his existence at once, than to be sent into our world, and trace the round of twenty or thirty, or threescore years of human life, without any hereafter? And indeed, were it not from a principle of obedience to God, and from the hopes of a happy futurity, after we have piously and honourably sustained the labours, miseries and trials of this life, I know not what wise man would willingly come into these tiresome scenes of mortality, or go through them with any patience.

What? To be trained up from infancy, under so many necessary follies, unavoidable prejudices, and wretched delusions, through the power of flesh and sense? To be sunk into such gross ignorance both of our souls, our better selves, and of the glorious being that made us? To lie under such heavy shades of darkness, such a world of mistakes and errors as are mingled with our little faint glimpses, and low notices of God our creator? What? To be so far distant from God, and endure such a long estrangement and utter absence from the wisest and best of beings, in this foolish and fleshly state, with so few and slender communications with or from Him?

What? To be in bondage to so many powerful and disquieting appetites, so many restless and unruly passions, which want the perpetual guard of a jealous eye, and a strong restraint over them, and which will be ever breaking out into some new mischief, notwithstanding our everlasting watchfulness?

What? To be ever surrounded with such sort of dangerous delights of sense; which though they were much safer in the innocent state, yet are now constant and strong temptations to folly, guilt, and misery? To have scarce any joys but what are closely attended with huge dangers? To have no satisfactions but what we are liable to pay dear for by excessive or irregular indulgence, and which are most likely to become the means of transgression and lasting anguish, either to the mind, or the body, or both? Can this be a desirable state for any wise or angelic being, who knows what happiness is, to be joined to such a body as our's, to be united to such a disorderly machine of flesh and blood, with all it's uneasy and unruly ferments?

These which I have now mentioned are indwelling mischiefs, which teize and defile the soul: But there is another train of inbred miseries which affect this sensible nature of our's, this animal frame, with huge agonies and distresses. What wise spirit would willingly put on such flesh and blood as our's is, with all the springs of malady and pain, anguish and disease in it? What? To be in danger continually of the racking disquietudes of gout and stone, and all the distempers I cited from *Milton's* poem? What? To have nature worn out by slow and long aches and infirmities, and lie lingring for many years on the borders of death before we can find a grave?

And, besides all these inbred evils, to be ever exposed to those innumerable grievances which come from abroad? What? To be ever subject to the common dangers, to the numberless casualties and injuries of nature, to the infinite bruises of the flesh, and mischiefs which attend and afflict this mortal life, and to bear the endless inconveniencies of the changing seasons, frosts and storms, and sultry sun-beams in this elementary world, and which more than half of mankind are exposed to, even with little or no relief? What? To be subject to the frequent insults of injustice, to the frauds of the crafty, the violence of the great, and the reproaches and oppressions of

of evil neighbours, to endure the private bickerings and domestic quarrels of families, the feuds and resentments, and teizing vexations of kindred, with tormenting jealousies and uneasinesses among nearest friends? To be ever disturbed with the hurry, buzz, and confusion of real or pretended men of business, and to lie open to the follies, weaknesses, and impertinences of those we must daily converse with? Add to this the terrors and tears of infancy, the ridiculous humours, the silly vexations, and the real sorrows of childhood, with all the snares and mischiefs that attend our youth, the laborious and uneasy toils of acquiring any knowledge, and fulfilling the necessary employments of life in our young and vigorous years, and the rubbing through long successions and cares, both personal and public, with all the private teizing uneasinesses which arise from family and domestic concerns in a manly state.

Go on with these trains of wretchedness, the grievous occurrences and disasters, the intemperance and succeeding indispositions to which at all ages we are continually liable, the risques and hazards we must sometimes run, both of health, and ease and safety, in procuring the necessaries of life, the constant decays of manly vigour, amidst the infirmities and the aches of old age, the pangs of dissolving nature, and the agonies of death; I say, upon a complete survey of all these hardships which the wisest and best of men cannot escape, I hardly think there is one spirit in heaven, or one man of equal wisdom, if such were found on earth, that would accept of this life in it's common circumstances, or even it's most favourable appearances, if his existence were to terminate at death, and he had no respect or reference to a better life to come.

Solomon, that wise prince and philosopher, seems to be much of this mind, when, after a survey of the whole scheme of human life in it's variety of scenes, without the views of hereafter, he declares that "he praised the dead which were already dead, more than the living which are yet alive: Yea, saith he, better is he than both they, even he who hath not been, and hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. *Eccles. iv. 2, 3* *." And upon the comparison of things, I must confess my self of *Solomon's* mind; for it appears to me, that the calamities and miseries of life are so numerous, as to over-balance all it's real comforts, and sufficiently shew that mankind, in it's present state, is not it's maker's favourite, but lies under evident marks of his displeasure, on the account of some great and universal degeneracy from the innocence of that state wherein man was first created.

Having drawn this inference from all the foregoing views of human life and circumstances, I would propose here, in their fullest light, the three strongest objections I ever met with, or that I could ever think of, against all these reasonings, and then endeavour to answer them.

S E C T I O N III.

Answers to objections against this argument.

I. **T**HE first objection is this: Can mankind in general be called miserable creatures, when there is not one in a hundred of them but uses all his art and skill to preserve himself in this life, and continue his situation? Do not all mankind

U u 2

strive

* That great man of antiquity *Cicero*, is much of *Solomon's* opinion, when he asserts "humanam conditionem satis per se miseram esse," in his discourse of consolation; and, in the same, he adds also, "non nasci longe optimum, nec in hos scopulos vite incidere."

strive to secure their lives, and maintain their abode in this state, with all the supposed miseries of it? Now, must not every man judge for himself, whether he is happy or no? Surely he would not seek to continue his existence in misery: And therefore if the real sorrows of life were greater than the pleasures and satisfactions of it, every man would be glad to be rid of his life, which makes him capable of these sorrows? I answer, in the first place,

Answer I. That wheresoever any thing of a future state of rewards and punishments is known and believed, it is no wonder men are unwilling to die; for they being generally conscious of so much sin and guilt, cannot think themselves to have a certain claim to future happiness; and therefore when they die, they know or fear they must be exposed to the punishment which is prepared for criminals in another world. Their aversion therefore to death, and the fear of it, even though they are in a miserable state, arises not so much from any sense of present happiness, which they are loth to lose, as from a fear or suspicion of taking a dreadful leap in the dark into greater misery.

There are some of our *English* poets who have said very pertinent things on this occasion, and I have read the citations of them on this subject.

“ Distrust and darkness of a future state
Make poor mankind so fearful of their fate.
Death in it self is nothing: But we fear
To be we know not what, we know not where.”

And another thus:

“ Aye; but to die, and go we know not whither;
————— for this warm body to become
A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling ice: * or to be worse than worst
Of those we fancy howling in long torment;
This is too horrible. —————
The weariest and most loathed wordly life
That pain, age, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, it is a paradise
To what we fear of death.”

Again, in another place, the same writer says,

“ If by the sleep of death we could but end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.
Oh! who could bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressors wrongs, the poor man's contumely,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
With all the long calamities of life,

When

* The poet supposes these torments in the future state.

When he himself might his quietus make
 With a bare bodkin? Who would bear such burdens,
 And groan and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,
 That undiscover'd country from whose border
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
 Than fly to others which are all unknown? *"

And it is very evident daily that multitudes would put an end to their own life at once, if they were sure they could put an end to their souls and all their nature, and send themselves into annihilation and nothingness. It is this wise and dreadful guard which the blessed God has set against self-murder, this terrible and eternal curse of hell and damnation, which constrains many miserable creatures to endure the sorrows of this life, and powerfully withholds them from the destruction of themselves. Their many and wilful crimes and innumerable sins of which they are conscious, forbid their hopes of a happy hereafter, and therefore they rather chuse to wear out life under their present and painful burdens, than plunge into an eternity of unknown miseries. It is one of these the poet introduces, crying out pathetically.

" O that the everlasting had not fixt
 His cannon 'gainst self-murder !"

If you should tell me, the heathens have no knowledge of this heaven or this hell which christianity and the bible acquaints us with, and yet they through many generations are fond of living, and strive to continue long in this life, notwithstanding all the pretended miseries of it; I would cite some of the ancients, as well as modern travellers, to make a reply for me: They would tell us that there is scarce any part of the heathen world, where they have not some notions and fears of punishment in a future state for the sins committed in this life, and particularly in the more polite nations of heathenism, they tell us, how unhappy self-murderers are made in that unseen and future world. When *Virgil* has brought his hero into the world of ghosts, he particularly opens the scene before him,

" Where *Minos* dooms the guilty souls.
 The next in place and punishment are they,
 Who prodigally throw their souls away.
 Fools, who repining at their wretched state,
 And loathing anxious life have hurried on their fate;
 With late repentance, now they would retrieve
 The bodies they forsook, and wish to live;
 Their pains and poverty desire to bear,
 To view the light of heav'n, and breathe the vital air:
 But fate forbids: The *Stygian* floods oppose;
 And, with nine circling streams, the captive souls inclose."

Thus

* This author, as we are told by the critics, was as well skilled in describing human nature as any writer whatsoever; and it is only in this view that I have cited his lines.

Thus you see the heathen writer makes this life miserable enough, though he shews their greater wretchedness and misery, who plunge themselves, at their own pleasure into the other world, in order to abolish and fly from the distresses of the present life. But in the second place, I answer :

Answer. II. Suppose this aversion to death, and this love of life to be very universal over all the world, and that without regard to any future state ; suppose that all mankind had rather continue in existence, in the midst of all their calamities and plagues, than venture into non-existence, and cease to be ; this will not prove that mankind is happy : For the God of nature, for wise ends, hath wrought this love of life into our flesh and blood originally, and mingled it with all animal natures whatsoever, in order to preserve the works of his hands ; so that the love of life, or reluctance against dying, is owing to the strong mechanic and animal principles of self-preservation, without any formed and sedate judgment of reason, whether it be best to continue in life or no ; or whether this life has more happiness or misery. I answer yet in the third place.

Answer III. That far the greatest part of mankind do not pass a true and just judgement on things, nor wisely balance the right value of them : All their faculties are engrossed, and their spirits, as it were, intoxicated with present sensible things they enjoy, and so they march onward in the rounds of human life, without thinking ; and therefore as painful, and as miserable as this state is, yet they cannot tell how to think of parting with it. They bear a thousand calamities rather than venture into non-existence. A club of drunken fellows in a prison, and in chains, who are to be scourged once a-day, yet they are still drinking and dancing and indulging their sport and merriment, thoughtless of the scourge ; but can these men be called happy ? or will any wise man assent to their judgment of their own state ?

Perhaps it may be objected still, that in order to make up the quantity of happiness, and to judge aright of it ; we must take in the temper of the person, as well as his circumstances of pain and pleasure. An indolent man may be happy with half the quantity of delights and relishing joys, which his gay and sprightly neighbour requires to his happiness. A hero may be happy under such loads of calamity, as would render a weak and mind miserable. A vulgar and ignorant creature may be happy in the midst of such low and foolish delights, which would disgust the wise, and give them pain. The glutton and the drunkard rejoice in such a happiness as would be scorned and despised by a man of virtue and philosophy. Now if we consider the bulk of mankind of such tempers and tastes as they have, they must be said to be happy, if they enjoy the good they desire, though it be but a sorry good, or rather an evil in the opinion of the wise and rational : And on this account men generally do and will prefer life to death, and their existence here, such as it is, to non-existence, even though there should be no hereafter. In answer to this reply.

Answer. I must grant it in a great degree : but then I say that the common satisfactions and delights of this life, which the bulk of mankind call their happiness, are most of them of so low and degenerate a nature, and many of them so criminal, that it is a sad sign that the intelligent creature man must be fallen from the original excellence of his nature, from his best principles of wisdom, and from the favour of his God, before he can make himself happy in such enjoyments. Let it be called his happiness, if you will have it so, since he chuses it, and is loth to part with it ; yet it is such a paltry happiness as no creature of reason would chuse, if he stood in the complete original rectitude of his nature, in the image and the love of his creator, and in the true exercise and vigor of his intellectual

intellectual and reasoning powers. He must have lost these original glories before he can think himself happy in such toys and follies, amidst all the evils and calamities that attend this mortal state

II. The second objection is this: If brutes suffer the same miseries, and yet they have never sinned, how can these miseries prove that man is an apostate or degenerate being? Do not all brute-creatures, the beasts and birds, and the insects of the earth, lie continually subject to the same pains, calamities, accidents, diseases and death, which attend upon mankind? And did their progenitors sin and offend God, or have they themselves offended him? Do not the cow and the hind, and most of the fore-footed mothers bring forth their young with extreme pain? Do not the bear and the lion, and the wolf, howl and roar for want of food, hunt and toil for their prey, and live sometimes in starving circumstances, pinched with keen hunger for whole days together? Is not the horse exposed to almost as many maladies as the man that rides it? And are not the creatures of this species extremely miserable under the wild and mad passions of their drivers? Survey the beasts of draught or of burden, under the furious scourges of the men that use them. What endless lashes they are exposed to, and what rude and pernicious strokes do they bear from any instrument within the reach of their enraged rulers, even while the laborious creatures are straining all their sinews, and even burst their nerves and their eye-balls in tugging, at their unreasonable loads at the brow of a hill? And after a little food, whereby nature is refreshed, and a little sleep, wherein life is forgotten, these wretched animals are called again to the team and harness to undergo their daily round of hardships and miseries? And have any of these creatures, or their ancestors, sinned against God? Are not the race of dogs ever snarling, quarrelling and fighting? And surely everlasting brawls and battles are misery enough:

Again, are not the feebler creatures, both wild and tame, subject to the cruel and perpetual ravage of birds and beasts of prey? Do not these animals live by devouring one another, and tearing their flesh from their bones, ere they are quite dead, and this according to the very constitution of their natures? And even the milder fowls, whom seem so innocent and harmless, the partridge and the red-breast, and the chicken, do they not devour millions of insects, as their constant and appointed food? Are not the mangled bodies and limbs of the hare and the sheep, the dove and the thrush, subject to extreme pain, when they are torn and bruised, and half eaten by the tyger and the wolf, the eagle and the hawk? And do not all those milder and gentler creatures occasion millions of painful sensations to the living insects which they prey upon, viz. the ants, and the flies, and the worms? And have any of these sinned against their maker, or degenerated from the first laws of their creation?

Again, I would enquire, are not harmful and bloody accidents much more common among many of the brutes than they are amongst mankind? A horse stalking over an ant-hill shall crush a hundred of the busy inhabitants with his broad and heavy foot, lay a whole kingdom in delolation at once, and leave multitudes of their little members bruised and broken, and the tiny creatures expiring in anguish? And if their organs were strong enough to form a sound which could reach our ears, what shrill outcries and screams, what dying groans, what innumerable accents of misery would arise from this little mangled nation, and pierce the heart of a compassionate traveller on every such accident? And let me ask now, did these diminutive animals, these tiny atoms of being ever offend the hand that formed them? Or

are

are they in a worse state or condition than they were at first formed? or are they liable to any new accidents which their original nature and constitution does not expose them to?

Yet further let us ask, do not sweeping storms and famine and pestilence sometimes make wretched havock among whole nations of the brutal kind, and spread the fields and the woods with distress and desolation? And in fine, do not the distempers of nature which are found amongst them, or the length of years bring them all down to death, and sometimes with tedious agonies and convulsive pangs? And yet can we say that God is angry with them, or that they are under any worse circumstances of life than what God at first formed them for?

But let us pursue the detail of their miseries yet further. Doth not man destroy thousands of them continually for his own food, and that by divine appointment? Are not birds snared by the fowler in a mortal net, or shot in flocks with murdering gun-powder and engines of spreading destruction? And the rest which escape by flight, how painfully do many of them drag on a lingering life among wounds and bruises? Are not oysters churned alive between our teeth? Are not millions of living shell-fish boiled to death in caldrons, and finny animals in shoals taken out of the sea and rivers, and while leaping with life, they are fryed in burning oil, or other scalding liquids? How many painful circumstances must some of these creatures necessarily pass through, even if we would catch and fit them for our food in the easiest manner? But generally their manner of dying is more painful misery, and death is brought upon multitudes of the brute-creation, merely as they are the appointed support of men and other animals, besides all the other accidents, pains and diseases that attend them.

Now notwithstanding all these miseries which are spread amongst the various brutal tribes in earth, air and water, yet we suppose them still to pass all the days of their existence according to the rank of their beings and the condition of nature which the wise and righteous governor has assigned them. We look upon them all as innocent beings, for they are capable of no sin nor guilt, and therefore all these tortures and agonies which they sustain are no punishments; they having never done any thing to give offence to their maker: and yet, says the objector, you must either allow these brutes to have sinned against their creator, since he appoints or suffers so many calamities to attend them in the very course of nature, or else you must confess that mankind may sustain all the scenes of misery which are before described, without being under any peculiar displeasure of their maker; and man, at least in his infancy and childhood, may be such a creature still as he came out of the hands of God, notwithstanding the vices he learns to practise as he grows up, and all these shapes of wretchedness which he is exposed to, and which are dressed up in this discourse into so formidable a spectacle.

I think I have spread out this objection in it's complete force; and in order to answer it, I ask leave to propose the following considerations.

Consideration I. It has been the opinion of many divines that all these varieties of wretchedness came upon the brutal creation as a general curse for the sin of man, who was the chief inhabitant and lord of this lower world; and therefore these brute-creatures which were, as it were, his slaves, are punished together with him; so that they suppose the sin of man brought misery into all the ranks of this lower creation, as well as into his own kind.

But I must confess I never well approved of this solution of the difficulty; for though I know men may oftentimes, by their perverse wills, abuse these creatures of
God,

God, yet the continual calamities that they fall into by being the natural and appointed food of men and of one another, as well as by unhappy accidents, by injuring, wounding, or killing casualties, by diseases, old age and death, are all ordained of God their creator, as the God of nature, and in the common course of things, without any special reference to the sins of men, as the moral and procuring cause. I can hardly persuade myself that God made so many millions of sensible creatures so miserable, or would permit them to be so, who are in themselves perfectly sinless and innocent, and have no manner of proper relation to any sinful head or stock, such as the first man is justly supposed to be to his own species; of which we have discoursed elsewhere. I proceed therefore to the second consideration.

Consideration II. The scripture on one hand gives us a plain account, that man originally was not made to die, and that the death of mankind was brought in only by sin, *Rom. v. 12.* and all the evils that attend human nature are derived from the same spring; because man was wholly at his first formation in the likeness of God, who made him in the image of his holiness and his happiness, and designed him to live for ever, if he continued innocent. *Gen. i. 26.* and chapter ii. 17. But on the other hand, the scripture teaches us that brutes originally are made to die, and wild beasts made to be taken and destroyed, partly for the natural food of man, and partly for his safety and ease. *Gen. ix. 3. 2 Peter ii. 12.*

Besides, it is evident to reason, and constant observation, that brutes are appointed for food for each other, as flying insects for the spider, small birds for the hawk, and sheep for wolves and lions. Now this cannot be without wounds and bruises, and mortal convulsions, and death. It is manifest therefore, that we may infer guilt from the endless pains, calamities, and death of men, because scripture reveals it, as the original cause; but we cannot infer the same from the sicknesses, wounds and deaths of brute-creatures, which are made by the God of nature for food to others, nor from all the appearances of pain and anguish which are found among the brutal creation: These must be solved therefore, and explained some other way.

Consideration III. The objection here supposes, that all the brutal creation have really the same acute sensations of anguish and pain as mankind, because many of them make use of the same sort of sounds and motions, groanings and howlings, and distortion of limbs, as we do when we are under acute pain. But it is hard to suppose that a righteous and merciful God should inflict such keen and extreme anguish upon millions of creatures whose race and generations are sinless, and perfectly innocent, and intirely such as they came out of his own hands; or that he should, in the course of nature, permit it to be inflicted, without any degree of sin or moral evil in any of them to deserve it.

And I think therefore it would be much more eligible and rational, with some modern philosophers, to suppose that brutes being made of mere matter, have no proper sensations of pleasure or pain; or at least that all their sensations of pain are but feeble and dull, and very imperfect, notwithstanding all their hideous outcries and convulsions of their flesh; I say, it is more rational to think so, than it is to suppose that there is any such sharp agonizing anguish and keen torment as sinful men endure, provided by the blessed God for creatures which are perfectly innocent, and which have no relation to any guilt or crime*. Will a God

VOL. VI.

X x

of

* If we were to consult reason and scripture jointly on this head, would they not both incline us to believe, that brutal sensations are not quite the same, nor near so intense as the sensations of mankind? for scripture, as well as reason, teach us, that the very soul and life and supreme principle of action in
brut.s

of infinite equity and goodness inflict so much natural evil where there is no moral evil?

It is probable that the sheep when he receives the mortal wound in his throat, feels as much pain as the swine, though the one is mute and silent, and the other sounds out his death with greivous shrieks and outcries: and perhaps if we had never seen nor heard any creature wounded or dying but a sheep or a fish, or an insect, who are mute, we should never have thought that the brutal sensations of pain were so keen, as those which human nature feels: Therefore if we judge merely by groans and clamours, we must suppose some creatures feel very little or no pain from their wounds and death; and yet why should the blessed God appoint so much less pain for the sheep than for the swine? Nor are the most grievous outcries and contortions of the flesh in other noisy animals a sufficient proof to our reason that they feel such sort of pain, or so intense as man does, and consequently we cannot make the same inference from their sufferings as we do from those of mankind.

Consideration IV. But supposing brutes have sensations of pain as sharp as our's, yet if they have a proportionable and equal quantity of sensations of pleasure through the course of their low life, then put these pains and pleasures of the brutal life into the balance, and the amount of them in the whole makes neither happiness nor misery; or perhaps their pleasing sensations exceed the painful; then they are happy; for misery is only found where the pain exceeds the pleasure in degree, or duration, or both; and that state is happiness, where, upon the whole survey, the pleasure exceeds the pain.

But in mankind it is pretty certain that their natural maladies, as well as the painful and afflictive accidents that attend most or all of them in this foolish and sinful world; far exceed the natural maladies or painful accidents which attend brute-creatures; for amongst them there is little or no intemperance to disorder their own natures; no wars to destroy millions of their fellows; no engines of cruelty and death among them to multiply the miseries of their own species; and upon the whole it is evident enough that the pains and sorrows and evils in almost every human life greatly exceeds the joys or pleasures of it, and consequently render man in this world but a miserable creature.

Consideration V. Let us remember also that brutes have no proper reflexion on things past, but only a sensation of the present: Now man besides all the pains of sense, has also the long and grievous uneasinesses that arise from remorse and anguish of mind, reflecting upon his own evil conduct in time past, and dismal presages and terrifying agonies arising from the constant fear and expectation of what may come; so that as mankind is generally subject to more pains and weaknesses, more diseases and uneasinesses in the body than brute-creatures; so the addition of uneasiness of mind, which arises from a long remembrance of, or reflexion on past sorrows, are as it were, a new sensation of them; and agonies of conscience for past sins, are new misery; besides the terrible forethought and expectation of future evils, whether in this life, or in the world to come, do very much increase the miseries of human

brutes is their blood which goes downward to earth when the brute dies. *Salomon and Moses seem to agree in this sentiment with some later philosophers, Lev. xvii. 11, 14. Eccles. xii. 7.* But the soul of man is of a noble original, a thinking spirit proceeding immediately from God, and at death ascending upward, or returning to God who gave it. Now can we suppose that mere blood and flesh have any sensations or perceptions above the capacity of matter? Can they possibly have such intense and keen sensations as a spirit, a mind, a thinking immaterial power, a kin to angels, but united to flesh and blood? Would the all wise and righteous creator form creatures capable of such intense torments, who are not, nor ever were, capable of offending him in the least instance?

nature

nature beyond that of the brutal world, since they are supposed to have no reflexion, no forethought. And it is not only the long and keen passion of remorse and sorrow arising from past sins or moral evils, and of fear and dread from the prospect of future miseries, which makes mankind more unhappy than brutes, who have no such retrospects nor foresights to torment them; but every uneasy passion of human nature, even grief and sorrow for natural evils, wrath, envy, malice, rage, jealousy, disappointment and despair, with all their dreadful train, are more keen and intense in the breast of man, make much deeper impressions on his heart, and sharper incisions into all the tender powers of his nature than brutes ever know or feel: They last also much longer; they dwell upon the spirit for days and months, and years; they mingle with the soul, and imbitter every sweet of life.

Brutal passions, should we allow them to be as strong, yet they are much fewer and more transient: The common calls of nature to eat or sleep, to sport or daily toil, abolishes the painful passion, the ill ferment subsides, the uneasiness vanishes, the cause of it is forgotten, and the creature is soon easy and happy again. But some of these uneasy passions of human nature cleave so close to the soul, that men cannot get rid of them; they sting like an adder, and prey upon the heart like a vulture, they teize the spirit day and night, they take away all appetite to food, and all the sweet relief and power of sleep. Was there ever an instance of a brute-animal whose passions ever wrought out such a scene of miseries for him as the unruly powers of mankind are daily working, and that not in one or two, but in multitudes of the human kind?

Upon all these views I think it must be acknowledged, that the evils which mankind suffer in the present state, are much superior to those of brutes, and consequently as they surmount all the pleasures of human life; so man must be pronounced miserable upon the balance of the whole; and therefore we must infer, that we of the human race cannot be in our maker's esteem a race of guiltless beings, since our portion in general in this life is superior pain and wretchedness; and especially since we find both by reason and scripture, that whatsoever calamities and death attend brutes, these, for wise purposes, are appointed by the God of nature, though they are without sin, while the calamities and death of mankind are expressly attributed to sin in the word of God.

Objection III. If the miseries of all mankind, or even of the biggest part of them in this life, are so great as to over-balance all their comforts, so that a wise spirit would never willingly consent to be dressed in our flesh and blood, and be born into our present world; then we can have no reason to give God our creator any thanks for our existence or life, since this is no blessing, and it would have been far better for us never to have been born. Now is it possible that the great God should make a creature who has not reason or just cause to thank him for his being?

Answer. If any creature who comes into our world, hath more probability of being happy than of being miserable in this life; he has reason to bless God for his existence in proportion to the probability of his happiness: But if a creature has more probability of misery than happiness in life, I cannot see that life is any blessing or privilege; nor can I see how he can rationally bless or give thanks to the great God for it, considered in itself, and abstracted from a future state.

And I add yet further, if any creature who comes into this world has a greater probability of being foolish and sinful here, and miserable hereafter, than he has of being wise and holy here, and happy in the other world; neither then can he with

reason bless God, or give thanks to the author of his being merely for his existence, or coming into life in such a sinful wretched world.

Now since this is the case, that the bulk of mankind are born to trouble and misery here, as *Job v. 7.* and as we have sufficiently shewn before; and if they are also most likely to run into sin and folly in this world, and misery in another, "for almost the whole world lies in wickedness, 1 *John v. 19.* and there are few who shall be saved," *Matt. vii. 14.* this prospect certainly forbids our mere existence or entrance into such a life to be called a blessing; and consequently we cannot reasonably give thanks merely on that account to the almighty being that made us.

There has been indeed a bold and severe charge brought against this opinion, viz. that "it is a very high degree of ungodliness; that it greatly diminishes, if not totally excludes the goodness and mercy of God; and consequently forbids our gratitude, and discourages our hope and trust."

Answer. It is a bold and grievous accusation indeed, but it wants all proof. Our Saviour himself has shewn us that it is certain, "the bulk of mankind walk in the broad way to destruction, and but few find the gate of life," *Matt. vii. 13, 14.* This alone is sufficient ground to maintain a probability of persons in general, who come into this world, being miserable rather than happy: And in this view how can mankind with reason give thanks to their maker for mere existence, which in the present fallen state, exposes us rather to misery than happiness? And the arguments which are used to oppose this opinion are so weak and ill-grounded, that I cheerfully leave them to the sense, reason and conscience of every sincere reader to answer and refute them, though they are made a foundation for several unjust triumphs.

But if the case be so, whence comes this dreadful scene, this dismal situation of things, that an intelligent creature cannot thank God for creating him? Not from God the creator, whose justice and goodness would never have suffered him to have created original beings as they came from his hands in such a situation as this: There must have been some dreadful ancient apostasy from God their creator, some general degeneracy and curse of a broken law or covenant, under the spreading desolation whereof mankind come into this world; nor is there any other way that I can imagine or guess at, whereby the justice and goodness of God the creator can be secured and vindicated from such hard imputations.

And though it is the blessed God that creates or forms fallen mankind from day to day, who come into such a situation and such wretched circumstances, yet it is all according to such an original law of nature or divine constitution made for innocent man, which was holy, just and good in itself. It is true the great God foresees that millions will now be miserable; and notwithstanding all this, his wisdom does not see fit to alter this constitution of things, for reasons which are unknown and unsearchable to us, and which will perhaps continue to be a secret until the great day of judgment. 'Till that time comes we can but form probable conjectures*. But that great day shall

* Suppose the great God had placed a man and woman in a certain inaccessible island, wherein there were herbs and roots of many kinds, but no sort of fruit, grain or corn in it: And suppose he had given them a sufficiency of fruits and corn to support them for a year or two, and more, with a special command to sow some of it, and plant immediately, for the support of themselves and their posterity hereafter; and assured them also they should have many children. If this man and woman should eat up all their corn and fruit intirely, even that which they should have sown or planted for their future support; then they and their children in all following years would have been hard put to it to live upon coarse roots dug out of the ground, a poor and scanty supply, and that with much toil and labour: Now would it have been unjust with God to have left them and their children to their constant hard labour and hard

fare,

shall reveal all the transactions of God with men, and set them in a glorious light, to the just vindication of all his own perfections, and the silence of all our cavils.

But observe, there are these three considerations which may serve to alleviate and moderate this dismal aspect and situation of things at present.

Consideration I. All mankind are justly required to adore and worship the great and glorious being, whose wisdom and goodness, as well as his power, shine bright in the creation of this world, and in the formation of mankind, as well as all other animals who dwell upon the earth; they ought to admire and praise him on this account, though no reasonable creature can properly give thanks but for some real benefit.

Consideration II. Every man who comes into this world, as considered in our common head and representative *Adam*, in his state of innocence and trial, with full power to obey his maker's law, and with far superior motives to obedience, hath good reason, even as *Adam* our father had, to thank God for his existence; for he was made in such circumstances, under *Adam* his head, which carried in them a much greater probability of standing and being happy, than of falling and being miserable.

Consideration III. Though the greatest part of mankind may not have sufficient reason to give thanks to God for their mere existence in this fallen state, yet all the sons and daughters of *Adam* have reason to praise the divine goodness for many favours they receive, viz. that they are not so miserable as they might have been by reason of their sins and follies, that they have any special satisfactions or comforts in life, and any lesser degrees of pain or sorrow than others sustain, or any relief for their own maladies and troubles: And especially if they are born and educated in a nation where the light of the gospel shines, they have further reason to acknowledge and bless the distinguishing goodness of their creator, who has placed them within the nearer and easier reach of happiness, if their own evil inclinations and obstinacy do not withhold them from seeking after it. And,

Consideration IV. When any of the race of mankind are made sensible of their sins and misery, and by repentance and faith in the grace of God, so far as it is revealed to them, have arrived at any tolerable hopes of their interest in his favour, and their acceptance unto life and happiness in another world, then they are called aloud to bless their divine Creator, as well as their Saviour, and to give thanks to the God of nature and grace together. And I think there is not one place in scripture where man is required to give thanks to the Lord but on one or other of these accounts which I have here mentioned §.

Upon

fare, without giving them any new corn or fruit to plant or sow, or without providing better food for them? And suppose their children also neglected to cultivate and multiply the best roots they could find, and several of them in every age fell into diseases and died by the badness or scarcity of their provisions, would the creator lie under an imputation of injustice for continuing their existence under these disadvantages, and thus punishing their original rebellion and their daily negligence?

And suppose further, that this solitary and inaccessible island lay in the midst of many other islands in the sea, whose inhabitants are continually informed by some revelation or divine messenger of the original state and the present circumstances of this unhappy country, in order to restrain the rest from disobedience to their maker and Lord in similar instances of any kind; might we not say, here is a just and valuable reason for which God should continue this island of rebels under their punishment? This may be applied in some measure to the forlorn case of mankind on this globe of earth, when compared with the many other planetary worlds, who may be preserved in their duty by being informed of our sad circumstances, though we know little of their's. But as I hinted before, these are but mere conjectural thoughts: It is only God himself in the great day of judgment can answer every difficulty, and scatter every darkness from all his works of providence.

§ There is no plain text that I can find where mankind is commanded or invited to thank God merely for their existence; and in those places where all nations, or all the earth are called upon to bless the Lord, and

Upon the whole, the result of things is this, that if any of us cannot upon rational grounds give thanks to God as our Creator for our existence, it is owing merely to our original apostasy from God in and by our first parents; for otherwise God would never have made intelligent creatures, who could not reasonably thank him for making them.

And then further I add, if we cannot rationally thank God for our creation here, until we have some hope of his favour and grace hereafter, this should awaken us all with utmost diligence in the midst of our miseries to enquire after the way of salvation, and pursue every appointed duty that is necessary for this end: For then we shall be able to bless God for bringing us into being, and we shall no longer lie under such a sad and dismal reproach of nature, as not to give thanks for our existence to the hand that formed us.

Thus far I have endeavoured to prove, that by the miseries of mankind we may have sufficient evidence that they are in a fallen and degenerate state.

S E C T I O N IV.

A full proof of man's apostasy by scripture and reason, derived from their sinfulness.

BUT after all, if it should be found upon the justest survey and balance of things, that the miseries of human nature considered alone, are not a sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the apostasy and fall of mankind from their maker's favour, and of some remarkable displeasure of the hand that created them; yet I am well assured that the early corrupt inclinations, the endless iniquities and crimes of men from their childhood, and that universal propensity to sin which is found among all the inhabitants of our world, joined with the loads of misery they sustain, are both together an effectual and convincing argument that we are a degenerate and fallen race of creatures.

Now that we are such a sort of criminal, guilty, sinful, and degenerate beings, and wretchedly forsaken of God who made us, or fallen under his heavy displeasure even from the beginning of life, will evidently appear both from the express witness of scripture concerning our sinfulness, from the necessity of renewing grace, and from the light of nature surveying the heathen world.

First, there are many representations in scripture of some universal degeneracy and corruption that has come upon all the sons and daughters of *Adam*, and which have been largely supported by many writers who have explained these texts, viz. *Gen.* vi. 5. "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man is only evil continually;" and chapter viii. 21. it is added, "that it is evil from his youth." *Psal.* xiv. 3. "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God: They are all gone aside; there is none that doth good; no, not one." *Eccles.* vii. 20. "There is not a just man upon the earth who doth good and sinneth not." *Isai.* liii. 6. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. Different wanderings, but all are wanderers." *Rom.* iii. 10, 12. "There is none righteous; no, not one: There

and give thanks to him, it is still in view of their having the knowledge and grace or salvation of God manifested in them.

There is none that doth good; no, not one." verse 19. "Every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." And verse 23. "All are fallen short of the glory of God, because all have sinned*." 2 Cor. v. 14. "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead," that is, spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

Now can we suppose that God would create such a world of beings, that every one of them coming out of his own hands in their original purity and innocence, should so universally break his law, run into sin and spiritual death, and naturally incline to practices which tend to defile and destroy themselves, and that without any one exception, if it had not arisen from some root of bitterness, some original iniquity, which diffused itself through all of them from their very birth or entrance into this world? Surely this universal corruption would incline any person to believe, either that God had not given to each of his creatures in their original formation a full and practical sufficiency to answer the demands of his law, and to preserve themselves from iniquity and guilt, or that it was lost in some hand or other. It is a strange and incredible thing to suppose that every single person among the millions of mankind should be born innocent and pure, with sufficient and practical powers of all kinds to fulfil the law of God and their duty, and that they should yet, by free and voluntary choice, every one for himself, for near six thousand years together, break his holy law, and rebel against him that made them, if there were not some original and universal contagion spread through them all at their entrance into life. See Quest. I. Section VII. at the end.

Secondly, I argue the same point from the scriptural doctrine of our recovery by divine grace. Let us consider in what manner the scripture represents the necessity of a great and divine change to be made upon the souls of all men, in order to their recovery from the ruins of their nature, and to obtain the favour and image of God, and future happiness. *John* iii. 3. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God:" And in other scriptures it is represented that "they must be born of the

* If St. Paul had not used such strong expressions here, as plainly include every individual of mankind, yet his argument requires this sense; for otherwise there would be some who would not want the salvation of Christ; whereas it is his great design to prove, that all men are condemned by the law, and stand in need of this salvation, without any exception at all.

Objection. Some have asserted this law, which requires perfect obedience, and which condemns the sinner to death, to have been abrogated as soon as Adam sinned, and that another covenant, even the covenant of grace was substituted and introduced, even before the sentence of death was pronounced upon Adam.

Answer. This objection has been often and effectually refuted; and it is very easy to shew that that law by which all mankind are bound under condemnation, can never be said to be abrogated, while it holds men, or binds them under guilt and death: "It is that law which now brings indignation and wrath upon every soul that does amiss." *Rom.* ii. 9. "That law which is written in the heart of man by nature." verse 15. "The same law which whosoever offends in one point, is guilty of all." *Jam.* ii. 10. "That law by which is the knowledge of sin, and by which no flesh shall be justified, for all have broken it." *Rom.* iii. 19, 20, 23. "It is that law which curseth every one who continueth not in all things there required, and from whose curse Christ hath redeemed the gentiles as well as the jews." *Gal.* iii. 10, 14, 13. This is the original law of works.

And though all mankind may be said perhaps to be under the covenant of grace in those general proposals of repentance and trust in the divine mercy, which are made to fallen men by their own reasonings, or by divine revelation, yet none are freed from the curse and condemnation of the original broken law, but those who have accepted of this covenant of grace by sincere repentance and faith or trust in the mercy of God. Now this is but a very small part of mankind, for there are few that shall be saved: And till this covenant of grace is thus accepted, every son and daughter of Adam, of mature years, are condemned as actual sinners by this law. This law therefore stands in full force against all, besides sincere penitents, and such as are justified by the gospel.

the Spirit," verses 6, 8. "They must be born of God." *John* i. 13. "They must be created anew in *Christ Jesus* unto good works." *Ephes.* ii. 10. "They must be quickened, or be raised again from their death in trespasses and sins." *Ephes.* ii. 5. "They must be renewed in their Spirit, or created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness." *Ephes.* iv. 23, 24. "They must be reconciled to God by *Jesus Christ*." *2 Cor.* v. 18, 19. "They must be washed from their sins in his blood." *1 Cor.* vi. 11. *Rev.* i. 5. "And since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, therefore if ever they are saved, they must be justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in *Christ Jesus*, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." *Rom.* iii. 23—25. Now can any one suppose that God has made such a world of creatures as have come into being from *Adam's* time to our's, which have all entered into this world, pure, holy, and innocent in their original state, and yet that there should not one of them retain his image in holiness, nor be fit for his favour and the blessings of his love, without being born again, being new-created, being raised from the dead, being redeemed by the blood of his own Son, and being washed in so precious and divine a laver? Do not all these representations make it appear highly reasonable to conclude, that every man is born into this world with some original contagion about him, or under some early degeneracy and guilt, and criminal imputation in the sight of God? Is it not a most incredible thing that not one among all the millions of these creatures should be fit to be made partakers of his favour, without such amazing purifications as require the blood of the Son of God, and the almighty operations of his blessed Spirit to redeem, and to new-create them, if they were born in their original purity? Do not all these things effectually teach us that mankind in their present generations even from their birth are not such creatures as God first made them?

But without entering into these arguments from scripture, which represent the wretchedness of all mankind; I think we may evidently prove, in the third place,

III. That far the greatest part of the world are born under some sort of degenerate and guilty circumstances by a mere survey of the heathen nations with the eye of reason, and by the light of nature.

A few days ago I was taking a view of the map of the world, and measuring with my eye the breadth and extent of the nations. I took a spreading survey of the vast *Asiatic* empires of *Tartary* and *China*, and a great part of the kingdom of *Megul*, with the multitude of islands in the *East-Indies*; I went on to survey the large brutal countries of all the southern part of *Africa*, with the savage nations of the *American* world. I observed the thousands or rather millions of mankind who dwell on this globe, and walk and trifle, and live and die there under the heaviest cloud of ignorance and darkness, who know not the true God, nor the way to his favour, who are drenched in gross impieties and superstitions, who are continually guilty of national immoralities, and practise idolatry, malice and lewdness, fraud and falsehood, with scarce any regret or restraint.

Then sighing within myself I said, It is not many years since these were all infants, wretched helpless infants, without any knowledge of the things of God or man. The inhabitants of whole regions have been born and brought up under parents who know not the true God, nor are acquainted with the path that leads to life and happiness. Are not these unhappy children, said I, formed and born under difficulties almost unsurmountable? Are they not laid almost under a moral impossibility of breaking their way of themselves, through so much darkness and error, to the knowledge, the fear, and the love of him who made them? Dreadful truth indeed;

deed; but so far as I can see, it seems to be certain and uncontestable! Such, I fear, is the case of those of human race, who at present cover a great part of this earthly globe, with very few exceptions.

Then I ran back in my thoughts four or five thousand years, and said within myself, what multitudes in every age of the world have been born in these deplorable circumstances in the midst of idolatry and profaneness, sin and death? They are inured from their birth to barbarous customs and impious practices: They have an image of the life of brutes and devils wrought in them by their early education: They have had the seeds of many immoralities and wretched wickedness sown and planted, and cultivated in them by the rude and savage instructions of those who went before them; and their own imitation of such horrible examples has confirmed this mischief long before they knew or heard of the being of the true God, or the discoveries of his will, or their duty: And perhaps they have never heard it to this day. Scarce any of them have admitted of one thoughtful inquiry, whether they follow the rules of reason, or whether they are in the way of happiness and peace, any more than their parents before them; and as they are born in this gross darkness, they grow up through all the stages of life to practise these vile idolatries, and all the shameful abominations of their country, and they go on to death in the same course: Nor have they light enough from without to make them plainly see their own folly and danger, nor have they had any probable workings of judgment or conscience within them strong enough to awaken them effectually to ask, "Is there not a lie in my right hand? Am I not in the way of sin and destruction?"

Then after a length of years in such impieties and madness, such ignorance of the true God and universal wickedness, they are plunged into the invisible world at death, without any evident or reasonable hope of divine favour in the other world, or at least at the utmost peril of his displeasure, and a dark and dismal uncertainty of the circumstances of that state into which they are delivered at the hour of death or the resurrection.

St. Paul confirms all that I have said, who, by his long and frequent visits and sojournings among the heathen nations, well knew their temper and state, and he represents them to us, as a most abominable herd of creatures, in several of his epistles. *Rom. i. 21—31*. Even the wise and the learned among them, the *Greeks* and the *Romans*, "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of birds, beasts, and creeping things, and worshipped the creature more than the creator. Their foolish heart was darkened: They were justly abandoned of God, and given up to work all uncleanness with greediness: They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, malice, &c. They were back-biters, haters of God, without understanding, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." In *Eph. iv. 18*. "They were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." In *Colos. i. 21*. "They were alienated from God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works.

It is true, we are told that there was so much of the law of God written in their hearts, that their consciences bore witness to it, in some instances, and their thoughts excused or accused them," *Rom. ii. 14, 15*. But we seldom read of the return of any of them to sincere repentance of their wickedness, by the reproofs of conscience. St. John tells his disciples, that "though they are of God, yet the whole world lies in wickedness," *1 John v. 19*. And St. Paul again assures us, "that those who have sinned without any express knowledge or revelation of a law, shall perish with-

out law." Doubtless their consciences, in the great day of judgment, will accuse them abundantly, and join with the sentence of God the judge in condemning them, and will hardly be able to make just excuses for any of them; and therefore they are represented "as without God, without *Christ*, and without hope in the world." *Eph. ii. 12.* A dismal and deplorable state!

St. *Peter* says indeed, "that God is no respecter of persons, that is, whether *jews* or gentiles; but, in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted of him: *Acts x. 34, 35.* But if there were very few among the *jews*, who feared God, and wrought righteousness, very few that shall be saved, as our Saviour saith," *Matth. vii. 14.* If there are very few in these learned nations of the gentiles, that feared God or loved him, how much fewer may we suppose to find in the more barbarous countries, which have no knowledge of God nor godliness*?

What kind and gracious allowances the blessed God will make at last for such unhappy creatures, he has not revealed to us in his word.

Now, upon this survey of things, I cannot but enquire, would this have been the case of mankind in these wide and unhappy nations? Would these have been the wretched circumstances both of their young offspring and their advancing years, in a hundred long successions, if they had been such a race of creatures as they came out of the hand of their creator, harmless and innocent? If the children had been esteemed, in the eye of God, as such undefiled, holy, and guiltless beings as some men are ready to imagine, could this have been their portion? In short, can we suppose, that the wise and righteous, and merciful creator of the world, would have established and continued such a constitution for the propagation of mankind, which should naturally have led so many millions of them so early into such dismal circumstances and temptations of almost unavoidable iniquity? Or would the blessed God have ever thus treated whole nations of infants, who are the work of his hands, if there had not been some dreadful and universal degeneracy spread over them and their fathers, by some original crime, and which even met and seized them at their entrance into mortal life, according to some just and ancient constitution? And what constitution can this be, but the original covenant with *Adam* in innocence, and the spreading consequences of his sin?

But as I have insisted upon several of these things at large, under some of the first questions in this treatise, I chuse not to repeat them here; but I will only stay to answer three or four general objections.

Objection I. It is a most unreasonable and unrighteous thing, to impute the sin of one person to another, and to make the children and posterity of a sinner suffer any of the punishments which were due to the father's sin; therefore the righteous and holy God has never appointed any such constitution, nor can he do it.

Answer. It is evident that death was the punishment threatened to man for sin, while he stood in innocence, to deter him from it: It is evident again from other scriptures, that death is the actual wages or punishment of sin: It is plain also from
universal

* Though the case stands thus with the heathen world, yet there are, and there must be some grounds of a sufficient vindication of the equity and goodness of God, notwithstanding these scenes of wickedness and destruction among men: This has been made to appear, in some measure, by several writers, and particularly in the third and fourth conferences of a book, intitled, "the strength and weakness of human reason:" See volume the second, pages 279—316. And what the reasonings of men cannot fully solve and vindicate now, the great God will explain hereafter, and maintain the equity of his own conduct, to the conviction of all his intelligent creatures, men and angels. Amen.

universal experience, that death passes upon all men, even upon children, and a thousand other miseries of life attend them; and it is granted by many of those writers who oppose our doctrine, that these miseries and death come upon children by the means of the sin of their first father. Now I could never yet learn any fair and justifiable account, how such sickness and pain, misery and death should come upon all mankind by means of the sin of *Adam*, if it be not in some sense imputed to them, even in the sense in which I have explained it in the "second essay." Let those writers give a fair and rational account, how this can come to pass but by such a constitution as I have represented.

It is not enough to say, that the just and righteous God appointed or even permitted it, in order to bring about greater glory to himself, and greater blessedness to mankind by the gospel of *Christ*, unless every one of those who suffer on the account of *Adam's* sin are made partakers of this greater blessedness, the contrary whereof is sufficiently evident.

Objection II. The common doctrine of original sin inherent, which supposes every man and woman to be born with sinful qualities, vilifies and pours great contempt on human nature, &c. If we act upon this principle, we shall rather hate than love one another.

Answer I. A depression of human nature under a due and deep sense of such universal sin and misery, is the first step towards our recovery by the grace of God and the gospel. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven," or the blessedness of the gospel. *Matth. v. 3.* "There were many who professed christianity in *Laodicea*, knew not that they were wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," therefore they did not seriously apply to *Christ* to be made partakers of his blessings. *Rev. iii. 17.* It is from a "knowledge of our sin and misery by the law, that we come to seek after the salvation of grace," *Rom. iii. 19, 24.* And I am persuaded that it is the pride and self-sufficiency of men not acknowledging their folly, wretchedness and ruin, that is one of the chief hinderances to the acceptance of the grace of *Christ*.

Answer II. It is yet more unreasonable to suppose, that the acknowledgment of this universal wretchedness of mankind should incline us to hate one another; are we not rather led hereby to pity each other under our common frailties and miseries? And is not this pity the first proper expression of love to the miserable?

Objection III. There can be no man born with principles of sin or sinful qualities, unless God be made the author of sin, because God who makes the nature of every man, makes all his qualities also. Nor could such a constitution of nature be a righteous constitution, which continues the propagation of every child with sinful principles in him, for it is the same thing as if God infused sin into them, and therefore there is no such constitution.

Answer. Hath not a wise and good God, considered as creator, ordained such a constitution of nature, whereby the most monstrous births are brought into the world by sinful mixtures, if mankind abuse themselves with brutes? And may not the great God be good and wise even in this constitution? Cannot a God of equity and goodness appoint such a course of nature among fallen mankind, whereby a drunkard or a lewd person may produce a child bearing the vicious qualities of the parent, or the miserable effects of the parent's sins? And yet the order of nature may be wise and righteous. Is not madness propagated through whole families, and sometimes in

several successions, by the fixed constitution of the God of nature, without God's own infusing madness into the brain or blood? Has not God appointed a seed to bring forth a plant? But if the seed be any way corrupted, it may by the divine appointment of the course of nature bring forth a corrupt tree. Is it God that infuses all these evil and corrupt qualities into men or plants, because his appointed order of nature, or his sovereign interposing will, does not hinder and prevent them?

It is a very needless thing to tell us that known truth, that the "course of nature separate from the agency of God, is no cause, or is nothing;" for this piece of instruction in metaphysical science, abates not the force of my argument.

Objection IV. The notion of deriving a sinful nature from *Adam*, runs foul upon this rock, that God doth not make or create the nature of every man who cometh into the world, because God cannot make a thing that is sinful?

Answer. Suppose, God is constantly producing by the sun, air, and rain, the harvest of the field according to his great law of vegetation; but if some person should sprinkle the seed-corn with a poisonous juice which might infect every grain, the seed might produce corn of a mortal quality. Now if it be asked, Did God make this harvest of corn? The answer is, yes: But did he make this corn poisonous? No, by no means. Now in these conceptions there is no difficulty or danger of mistake. But if men have a mind to be captious, they may spend whole pages in cavilling. The plain case is this, God the creator makes the nature of every man by his original and almighty order of creation or propagation: But it was *Adam* brought sin into the nature, and made it sinful.

There are some other objections which have been raised against this doctrine, viz. "If original sin be natural, it is unavoidable, then it is necessary, then it cannot be culpable," &c. But all of this kind, with many others, are sufficiently answered, not only in the late "vindication of the scripture doctrine of original sin," but in many smaller papers which Mr. *Hebden* of *Suffolk* has lately published on this occasion, as well as in many other excellent writers ancient and modern. Yet it is evident that some of the opposers of truth find it a more easy and a more pleasant thing to repeat with assurance what they have said themselves, than to take due notice of what their fathers, or their neighbours have answered.

T H E

T H E

S E C O N D E S S A Y.

O R,

A plain explication of the doctrine of imputed sin and
imputed righteousness.

THE doctrine of the imputation of sin and righteousness hath been attended with many noisy controversies in the christian world: And though these things may be frequently met with in common life, and that without any controversy, yet they seem to have created such difficulties in religion, as are hard to be compromised. Let us make one more attempt and try, whether these notions and expressions may not be set in so fair and easy a light, by tracing out the plainest ideas of them in the common affairs of mankind, that when they are applied to religious subjects and texts of scripture, it may vanquish these difficulties, and reconcile the sentiments of several contesting parties in christianity.

When a man has broken any of the laws of his country, and is actually fined or imprisoned, or put to public shame or death, or is condemned to fines or imprisonments, to the pillory or the gallows, it is plain that "sin is imputed to him, his wickedness is upon him, and he bears his iniquity;" that is, he is accounted or reputed a criminal by the court of justice, and he is condemned or dealt with as an offender, he is made liable to, or obliged to bear the punishment, or he is actually punished.

On the other hand, if a righteous or innocent man is falsely accused of any crime, and he is acquitted by the court, then "sin is not imputed to him" by that court, or he is not condemned, "but righteousness is imputed to him," or he is reputed and pronounced righteous, and dealt with as an innocent or as a righteous man; or, in another scripture-phrase, "his righteousness is upon him."

Or if a reward be either assigned or actually given to a man according to the law upon the account of any righteous or good action he has done, this act of virtue or goodness is imputed to him, and his righteousness is upon him, he is dealt with as a righteous and deserving person, the reward of righteousness is given him.

If a man has been guilty of a crime which deserves capital punishment, but the punishment is remitted by the mercy of the prince upon his repentance, at the intercession of some nobleman, and he is entirely pardoned, then "sin is not imputed to him, he is justified from that crime, and righteousness is imputed to him" by the free favour of the prince, that is, he is not condemned but absolved; he is not liable to
punishment

punishment now, but he has a right to impunity and life, or he is dealt with as a righteous person, or as though he had not transgressed.

- Or suppose a man has been guilty of treason, and his estate is taken away from him, and from his children for ever, then the "sin of the father is not imputed to the father only, but to the children also, that is, they bear the iniquity of their father, his punishment is laid upon them," they suffer for their father's sin or crime, and that in their following generations even to late posterity; they are exposed to poverty and hardships for the treason of their ancestor, and his sin is imputed to them as well as to him.

If the crime of which a man is guilty be murder of the innocent, and the criminal forfeits his life and estate by the sentence of the law, and his children become beggars and vagabonds, then the blood of the innocent man is said to be upon the murderer, and upon his children, because they also suffer for their father's crime. When the *jews* imprecate the guilt of the blood of *Christ* which they shed, to be imputed to them, and punished on them and their children, this is their language, *Matth. xxvii. 25.* "His blood be on us and on our children."

Or if we should suppose some criminal to have incurred the penalty of imprisonment, banishment, or scourging, and the laws of the state should permit a friend of his to become his surety, and to suffer these penalties in his room, then the crime is said to "be imputed to the surety, or to be laid upon him, he bears the iniquity" of the criminal, he stands liable to the penalty, and actually suffers for the sin of another man: And thus the crime is not imputed to the original offender, but upon his submission to his prince, and trusting in his mercy, he is entirely acquitted, and dealt with as an innocent or righteous man: then righteousness is imputed to him, though his crime was imputed to his kind surety, when he suffered for it; and the sufferings of the surety are imputed to the criminal, when he is absolved or acquitted on that account.

And if we should suppose the prince, or the laws of the land, to permit this kind friend or surety to exert himself in some eminent act of obedience or service to which a reward is promised; and all this to procure some further favour for the criminal, and to intitle him to the promised reward, then this act of eminent service may be said to be imputed to the original criminal, that is, he is rewarded on the account of it: so that upon the whole, the criminal comes to have not only a freedom from guilt, and a right to impunity, but a right also to the reward, in virtue of what his kind friend and surety has suffered and done for him. The criminal is both pardoned, justified and rewarded for the sake of what his friend has done or suffered, and his friend's doings as well as his sufferings may be said to be imputed to him.

Or if any man practise obedience and righteousness in an eminent or illustrious manner, and he together with his posterity are dignified and rewarded on the account of that eminent obedience, then this obedience and righteousness of the father is imputed to the children, his righteousness is upon them; that is, they are dignified and dealt with as though they had been eminently righteous and obedient, upon the account of what their father was and did.

Now, if among the histories of the nations we have any transactions of this kind recorded by ancient writers, do we not easily understand what these writers say? Is not their meaning very plain and intelligible? Should we stand debating with long chicanery and cavilling, by rules of grammar, logic and politics, whether such things were possible or no? Is not the sense easy to a common reader?

reader? Then why should we think these same sort of things and phrases, in matters of religion, are so dark and so difficult, as to need huge comments and quarrelsome folios to explain them? Why should we not agree in the plain meaning of them, when we meet with any such phrases among the sacred writers? And when we find such representations made to us in the things that relate to God and man, sin and righteousness, in the books that teach us the way to salvation, why should we not receive them in their plain common sense, without contending about them?

The chief difficulty in adjusting our common ideas in any of these cases seems to me to be this: How can the particular acts of the treason of the parent be imputed to a child, especially in it's infancy, though it is granted that he suffers banishment and poverty for the sake of his father's treason; I say, How can these particular criminal actions be imputed to him, since this infant was never capable of committing these acts of treason, they being quite out of the reach of a child, and impossible for him to commit?

Or how can those eminent and illustrious acts of obedience or righteousness which were performed by a father, be imputed to a child, if that child never stood either under a direct obligation, nor had any capacity to perform those very actions and services?

To these enquiries, I make these two plain answers.

Answer I. Those acts of treason, or acts of service, by very plain and common forms and figures of speech, are said to be imputed to the children, or to be upon them, when they suffer or enjoy the obvious and legal consequences of their father's treasons, or of their eminent services taken in the gross and comprehensive view of them, as they are criminal or meritorious; though the particular actions and circumstances of those treasons, or of those services, could never have been practised by the children, at least in their minority. This would give no difficulty at all to the reader, who should peruse these human histories, and read such narratives in them: And why should it give us any difficulty when we read this divine account of things in the holy writings, or in human discourses on divine subjects?

I answer also in the second place,

Answer II. The words sin and righteousness may be taken in common authors, as I shall shew presently they are often taken in scripture, in these two senses.

Sin or iniquity signifies either the particular acts of disobedience to a law, or it signifies the legal result of those disobedient acts, that is, the guilt or the liability to condemnation, and obligation to bear punishment which arises from those acts of disobedience according to the law.

And thus when we say the sin or iniquity of the father is imputed to the children of a traitor, who never were nor could be precisely in their father's situation or circumstances, we do not mean that every single evil act of the father is charged upon the child, as if the child had done it; but that the guilt or liability to punishment which arises from those acts of the father is so far transferred or imputed to the child, that the child suffers banishment or poverty for the sake of it: and this according to the law and custom of nations is esteemed just and righteous.

In like manner righteousness has two senses: It either signifies the particular acts of obedience to any law or command of a superior, or it signifies the result of those actions, that is, a right to impunity, a freedom from punishment, and a right

to life, or liberty, or honour, or any reward which belonged by the law to such acts of obedience.

And so when we say "the righteousness of the father is imputed to the child of a person" who has performed some eminent act of service or obedience, we do not mean that all those special acts and circumstances of the father's service or obedience are minutely and particularly imputed to the child; but the general result of those acts, that is, the rectitude in court, or the right to impunity and reward, which is the result of the father's performances, is imputed to the child.

Now if we would but try to explain every text of scripture wherein either imputed sin or imputed righteousness are mentioned in the word of God, either in express words, or in the plain sense and meaning of them, I am persuaded we should find them all easy and intelligible, and free from cavils and controversies.

If we met with such narratives in common history as I have suggested, surely we should not expect that the writer should express himself in such a nice accuracy of learned and scholastic language, as men of modern controversy are almost constrained to use, in order to guard their expressions against all possible cavil and objection. Nor should we enter into such a detail of critical and perplexing debates about every punctilio both of word and sense in this history, as is too often done when we read these things in scripture, as relating to *Adam* and *Christ*. And since the holy scriptures were written for the common use of mankind, and their general meaning is obvious and plain, why should we rack every syllable, and put every expression to the torture to make it confess what we have a mind to have it speak according to the different parties under which we list ourselves.

If we consider that account which scripture gives us of all mankind falling under sin, and the legal or penal consequences thereof by the sin of *Adam*; or if we consider *Christ's* taking upon him the sins of men, bearing their sins, and suffering for them as a surety or sacrifice; or if we consider righteousness imputed to those that believe, or even the righteousness or obedience of *Christ* imputed to penitents and believers; I think we should find no great difficulty to adjust our ideas of these things, if we would but suffer ourselves to form our sentiments of these matters by the plain, natural and common expressions and ideas of men about these subjects, and in a candid manner receive the obvious meaning of such language.

In order to confirm what I have said, I desire to make these three remarks.

Remark I. That there are several such histories in the bible, wherein instances of the like kinds among the transactions of men are delivered down to us in such sort of expressions or words of the same import.

Abraham's eminent obedience to God in bringing his son *Isaac* to the altar, was rewarded, not only in blessings to *Abraham* himself, but to his seed. *Gen.* xxii. 16—18. "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." Here it may be said, that *Abraham's* obedience, at least in the result and consequences of it, is imputed to his seed.

This same promise is repeated again to *Isaac*, and assigned to his posterity, for the sake of *Abraham's* eminent piety and obedience. *Gen.* xxvi. 4, 5. "I will perform the oath that I swore unto *Abraham* thy father, and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries, because that *Abraham* obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my sta-
tutes

tutes and my laws." *Abraham's* righteousness was thus imputed to *Isaac* and his seed.

Phineas the son of *Eleazar* was "zealous for the Lord among the children of *Israel*, and God gave him and his seed after him the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God," and slew the criminals in *Israel*. *Numb.* xxv. 11. This eminent act of righteousness was so far imputed to his children, as that they received the reward of it as well as himself.

Achan, who had stolen the silver and the rich garment and the wedge of gold from among the spoils of *Jericho*, provoked the Lord to anger; and his crime, by the appointment of God, was so far imputed to his children, that they were all stoned for the sake of his crime. The guilt or punishment of it was imputed to the children together with the father, *Josb.* vii. 24.

The falsehood and covetousness of *Gebazi* were imputed to his posterity. *2 Kings* v. 25. When God by the mouth of his prophet pronounced that leprosy should cleave unto him, and to his seed for ever."

Many other instances of this kind might be collected from the sacred writings, to shew us how persons may not only have their own sin, or their own righteousness imputed to them in the punishments or the rewards they receive; but other persons also may have that sin or righteousness imputed to them; that is, they may fall under condemnation and punishment, or have a right to impunity and reward by a wise and holy constitution of God, upon the account of the crime or obedience of their forefathers.

Note, It is not my business and design in this place to justify at large the conduct of providence in these instances, but only to represent the actual facts or matter of history, and shew how very easy and intelligible these sort of representations are, and that they would afford no difficulty to a reader, nor occasion any controversy about the sense of them, if we came with honest minds to read them, and not under any former prejudices or bias.

Remark II. It is pretty evident that the scriptures of the old and new testament use the words "sin and iniquity," חטא or חטאת and עון and Ἀμαρτία both in the *hebrew* and *greek* languages, to signify not only the criminal actions themselves, but also sometimes they signify the legal result and consequences of these actions, that is, the guilt or liability to punishment, and sometimes the punishment itself, whether it fall upon the original criminal, or upon others for his sake, and on his account.

In the same manner the scripture uses the word righteousness, צדק or צדקה and Δικαιοσύνη, to signify, that right to impunity, that rectitude in court, that justification, or being pronounced righteous, or that right to reward, which is the result of those particular acts of piety and obedience, as well as to signify the particular acts of obedience or piety themselves. If this has not been sufficiently shewn already by writers in this controversy, a moderate study of some of those texts where these words are used, will convince us of it.

I might give a short specimen of it in a few scriptures. *Job* xxxiii. 26. "God will render to a man his righteousness," that is, not the very righteous actions, but the proper result of them, or those blessings which are the fruits of righteousness. *Psal.* xxiv. 5. "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation," that is, the reward of righteousness. *Hosea* x. 12. "Sow to your selves in righteousness," that is, in and by actions of piety and goodness; "till the Lord come and rain righteousness upon you," that is, till he pour down on you the rewards or fruits of piety.

I might add here, that in several places of St. Paul's epistles, the word "righteousness" is used to signify justification in the passive sense of the word, or a justified state, a rectitude in court, or a right to impunity and life. *Rom. x. 3.* "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" which must mean that Christ is the great design or accomplishment of the law of God, in order to the justification of believers, or to their obtaining a right to life. *Rom. x. 10.* "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness," that is, to obtain justification, or a justified state. *Gal. ii. 23.* "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain;" that is, if a justified state, or a right to life came by the law, &c. And particularly where the word λογίζομαι, or "impute," is joined with "righteousness," as *Rom. iv. 3.* *Gal. iii. 6.* "Abraham believed God, and it was counted or imputed to him for righteousness." *Rom. iv. 5.* "His faith is counted for righteousness;" it is not ἀντι or ὑπερ, that is, for and instead of righteous works, but εἰς δικαιωσιν, that is, in order to justification, or acceptance with God.

And so in other places of scripture, a work whether good or evil, is put for the reward of it. *Job xxxiv. 11.* "The work of a man will he render unto him;" that is, the recompence or fruit of his work: So the word "iniquity" is used to signify the punishment of it. *Hos. xii. 13.* "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity;" that is, the punishment that it deserves. So Paul desires *Philemon* to impute any wrong he had received from *Onesimus* to himself, *Philem. verse 18.* Not the evil action, but the damage he sustained.

And upon this account when sin or righteousness are said to be imputed to any man upon the account of the works of righteousness or sin which he himself has done; then these words perhaps may sometimes denote the good or evil actions themselves, together with the legal result of them in guilt and condemnation, or the legal rectitude in absolution and justification. But when the sinful or righteous actions of one person are so imputed to another as to bring punishments or rewards upon that other, then generally the words "imputed sin and righteousness" signify the legal and forensic result of these sinful or righteous actions, that is, an obligation or a liability to punishment on one side, or a right to impunity, and the reward on the other.

It may be granted indeed, if one man commit murder, and three or four other men contrived or encouraged, aided or abetted the murderer in the commission of the crime, perhaps the action of murder, as well as the legal penalties of it, may be in a sense imputed to all these men, because they are all actual sharers in the fact: But this is not the case in these scriptural imputations we are speaking of, therefore it is only guilt or penalty that is imputed or transferred.

Some person may be ready to enquire,

First, How can the guilt of sin or the condemnation for it be justly imputed or transferred from one man to another, without the imputation of the sinful actions themselves? Or how can the legal rectitude, that is, the right to impunity and life, or the righteousness of one be imputed to another, without the righteous actions themselves being imputed? To this I answer,

Answer. The very same just constitution or law, whether human or divine, by which the actions themselves, whether good or evil, could be supposed to be imputed, is sufficient for the imputation of the legal result of those actions, and that with as much justice. Nay, I might add, with much more justice in many cases, may the legal result or punishment of sinful actions be imputed to others, or transferred to them than the actions themselves: For the imputation of the evil actions to an innocent person, if it could be done, would carry more of crime and blame, and shame, and of personal defilement and demerit in it, than the mere imputation

of their guilt, that is, a liableness to condemnation and punishment. And indeed when the punishment is transferred to others, then the sin or guilt is said to be imputed to them, as I have shewn before.

Secondly, It will be objected, may not the very same sinful actions of the father be imputed to the posterity, since the children were in the father naturally when he committed those sins? "Is not *Levi* said to pay tithes in *Abraham*, *Heb.* vii. 9. because he was yet in the loins of his great grandfather, when he paid tithes to *Melchizedek*?"

Answer I. The apostle expresses it not as a matter of strict reasoning, because he adds the words, "as I may say so," to intimate, it is rather an allusion or emblem, than strict reasoning.

Answer II. If there could be supposed any advantage by this natural inbeing of all men in *Adam* to support the imputation of his sin to them, yet there can be no necessity of it, for *Christ* was not naturally in us, though our sins were imputed to him. This imputation of sin therefore to the one or the other signifies only the transferring the guilt, condemnation or punishment, and not the imputation of the same evil actions, or the transferring them from *Adam* to us, or from us to our blessed Saviour.

Thirdly, A third argument to prove the good or evil actions themselves imputed, as some suppose, may arise from the strong expressions of scripture, especially in *Rom.* v. 19. where there is so particular a comparison between our being made or "constituted sinners by the disobedience of *Adam*, and our being made or constituted righteous by the obedience of *Christ*." To this I answer,

Answer. That the *Jewish* and all the eastern writers deal in very strong figures and expressions to signify plain and obvious things; and therefore there is some allowance to be made in the explication of them, or when we reduce them to plain language. And besides, as *Adam* was the head and spring not only of our guilt and death by imputation, but of our inherent sin by natural propagation also; so *Christ* was the head and spring not only of our justification and life by his imputed righteousness, but of our inherent holiness or righteousness by sanctification: And perhaps the strength of the expressions might be used to intimate all this to us.

But if only the result of their good or evil actions were imputed to us, those strong expressions might be used. I am sure when "all the iniquities of the children of *Israel* and all their transgressions in all their sins, are confessed over the head of the goat, while *Aaron* lays both his hands upon it, and he is said to put or transfer them all upon the head of the goat, and that the goat should bear upon him all their iniquities into the wilderness, or a land of separation," *Lev.* xvi. 21. All these words can signify nothing more than transferring to the goat the guilt or condemnation or liableness to punishment, misery and death, which these sins deserved, and to which the goat might be exposed; for a brute creature cannot have human sins any otherwise imputed or transferred to it: the particular sinful actions of man cannot be transferred to the brutal sacrifice in any other sense: Nor do I see a necessity of any other sense in which the sin of *Adam* was imputed to his posterity, or the sins of men to the Son of God*.

Z z 2

If

* Let what will be said to confine the sense of this imputation of sin or righteousness to the legal or forensic result of good or evil actions; let what will be said to exclude and deny the imputation of the actions themselves to others; yet those who oppose this doctrine will and do level almost all their arguments against the imputation of the actions themselves, and then triumph in having demolished what we never built, and in refuting what we never asserted or maintained. Nor do I know any other reason for this their conduct, but that while they put such senses upon our words as we disclaim, they can glory in their own fancied victories; but where the truth or integrity of it lies, I know not.

If one would keep our ideas of these things as clear and distinct as possible, I think we may do it by virtue of this distinction, or this two-fold sense of the words sin and righteousness.

Fourthly, It is possible some may in the fourth place object that it cannot properly be called imputed righteousness, if the righteous actions themselves are not imputed; for in proper speech the result of *Christ's* righteousness, that is, the right to impunity and eternal life which he procured for us, is given to us rather than imputed.

Answer. To this I answer and grant, that this is the very language of scripture: It is called "the gift of righteousness, *Rom. v. 17.* and eternal life, which is the result of *Christ's* righteousness, is the gift of God through *Jesus Christ.*" *Rom. vi. 23.* "And the forgiveness of sins is given to *Israel.*" *Acts v. 31.* Yet let it be observed also, that the very reward itself is sometimes said to be reckoned or imputed in scripture. *Rom. iv. 4.* The word is λογίζεσθαι, which our translators have construed "imputed" in the next verse. But this leads me to the next remark.

Remark III. The scripture does not, as I remember, any where in express words assert, "that the sin of *Adam* is imputed to his children, or that the sins of mankind, or of believers were imputed to *Christ*, or that the righteousness of *Christ* is imputed to believers;" yet still I think the sense and true meaning of all these expressions is sufficiently found in several places of scripture.

If we consult the language of the prophets *Isaiab*, and *Jeremy*, and *Daniel*, and the apostles *John*, and *Paul*, and *Peter*, in their representation of some of these subjects, *Isa. liii. 4—12.* and *Jer. xxiii. 6.* and *xxxiii. 16.* *Dan. ix. 24.* *Rom. v. 12—19.* *1 Cor. xv. 3, 21, 22.* *Gal. iii. 13.* *2 Cor. v. 21.* *Ephes. i. 7.* and *ii. 5, 13.* *Phil. iii. 9.* *Col. 1, 14, 20.* *Heb. ix. 14, 26.* *1 Pet. ii. 24.* and *iii. 18.* *1 John i. 7.* and *ii. 2.* and *iv. 10.* and *Revel. i. 5.* and *v. 9.* and many other scriptures, we shall find the substance and true sense of these phrases as I have explained them.

Yet since these express words and phrases of the "imputation of *Adam's* sin to us, of our sins to *Christ*, or of *Christ's* righteousness to us," are not plainly written in scripture, we should not impose these very expressions on every christian; let every one take their liberty in manifesting their sense of these plain scriptural doctrines in such words and phrases of their own, as are modest and secure from offence and danger, or confine themselves to scripture-language.

But if these words were expressly written in the bible, they could not reasonably be interpreted to any other sense, than that which I have explained in and by so many examples, both in the scripture-history and in common life. Let us make this appear in a few instances.

When we say, "The sin of *Adam* is imputed to all his posterity," can we possibly mean that every evil motion of *Adam's* eye or his heart towards the forbidden fruit, with every thought of unbelief of the threatening, or every working of ingratitude toward God in his mind, or pride in his heart, together with the action of eating this fruit at his wife's request, is minutely and particularly imputed to all his infant-seed? Can these criminal thoughts be imputed to them who never were under any temptation or capacity of tasting that fruit, or of breaking that particular law of God? Must we not necessarily therefore mean, that it is the guilt of *Adam* in that sin, or his liableness to condemnation and punishment, to misery and death, is imputed or transferred to his posterity? "Imputation of sin" in this case signifies the "imputation or transferring of the legal or penal consequences of sin;" that is, misery and death.

When

When the sins of *David*, and of *Mary Magdalen*, and *Rahab*, and of all the adulterers, the harlots, and the murderers that ever repented and believed on *Christ*, are said in general to be imputed to *Christ*, is it proper to explain it by saying all the particular lustful thoughts, with every adulterous wish, and every impious and bloody purpose in their hearts, together with all the lewd and vile actions both of men and women, are in themselves imputed, reckoned, or transferred to the pure and holy *Jesus*, when he was made a sacrifice for their sins? Can *Christ* be counted or reputed as the lewd or bloody transgressor? Can any thing else therefore be meant by such an expression of *Magdalen's*, or of *David's* sins imputed to *Christ*, than that the guilt or liability to punishment, which is the legal result of their crimes, was laid upon *Christ* when he bore all their sins in his body on the cursed tree?

Let it be considered, that if all their sinful actions could be and were imputed to *Christ*, which are only and properly personal, I cannot well see how to avoid the imputation of the vitiosity and sinfulness and dreadful demerit of all these actions to *Christ*, together with the actions themselves, and thus the defilement of their sins in every bad sense of it, will be transferred and imputed to the blessed *Jesus*, the holy one of God, which I fear would too nearly border upon the language of blasphemy.

It is evident indeed in many places of scripture, that our "sins were imputed to our blessed Saviour, when *Christ* bore the sins of many, when he was made sin for us;" that is, a sin-offering, when the "Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all, when the Lord pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief, and made his soul an offering for sin:" But I think it can never mean any more than this, that he was made a proper sacrifice of atonement or expiation for those sins, by bearing sorrows and punishments, and death upon that account, which were the legal result of our sins, in order to deliver us from them.*

So when we say, "the righteousness of *Christ* is imputed to believers," I think it can never mean that every particular righteous action of *Christ*, as he was a holy observer of the *jewish* law, a preacher of the gospel, a master of a family, or a worker of miracles, can be imputed to women or children, who were never called to any such office, or to perform these actions; nor can his suffering of circumcision, or his celebration of *jewish* festivals in the temple, among the males of the house of *Israel*, be minutely and particularly imputed to gentile christians, both male and female, who never were under the command of circumcision, or who would have sinned in practising *jewish* ceremonies: And therefore the "righteousness of *Christ*, when it is said to be imputed to believers," can mean no more than that the legal result of his righteous acts, or acts of obedience to God, is imputed to them, or bestowed upon them. This "gift of righteousness" therefore, is a right to impunity, a legal rectitude in the court of God, an absolution from sin and punishment, a pardon of sin and justification in the sight of God, and a right to eternal life, which are conferred upon them for the sake of what *Christ* has done and suffered.

And indeed for this reason I have sometimes scrupled to use this language, though some very good writers have used it, viz. that the merits of *Christ*, or his satisfaction, are imputed to us. The satisfaction of *Christ* is the recompense which he made to God for our breach of his law: His merit in it's most natural sense signifies his proper desert and worthiness of all those divine honours and blessings which were

his.

* If any one will doubt whether in scripture the sins of one person are ever imputed to another, or born by another, in the sense declared, let him read even doctor *Whitby* himself in his exposition on 1 *Pet.* ii. 24, 25. where I think any man may find satisfaction in this point, how "*Christ* bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

his own personal rewards, as well as of that pardon of sin and eternal life which he obtained for us: And this merit and satisfaction arises from the transcendent value and dignity of the person of *Christ*. Surely this satisfaction cannot be imputed to us properly, lest we should be said to have satisfied, and made God a recompense for our sins. His merit cannot be imputed to us in a strict sense, for that would make us meriters, either of such peculiar glories as he had, or at least of our own pardon of sin and eternal life.

But if we sink the sense of the word merit so as to mean nothing but those blessings of pardon, grace, and eternal life which *Christ* has merited for us, or rather the legal right of true believers to those blessings, according to the covenant of grace; then the phrase of his merits imputed, may be used without offence or error.

Here let me make these two reflexions.

Reflexion I. It is the explaining this doctrine of imputed sin and imputed righteousness, so as to include all the particular acts of sin and righteousness, with their proper merit or demerit, &c. that has tempted so many persons to deny the doctrine itself.

Reflexion II. If it should be allowed that the very act of *Adam's* disobedience was imputed to all his posterity; if the very same sinful actions of men could be imputed to *Christ*; if the very actions of *Christ's* obedience and righteousness could be imputed to believers, what greater punishments could the one justly and reasonably suffer? Or what blessings could the other reasonably be intitled to, or enjoy, according to scriptural representations of things, beyond what scripture has assigned, either to mankind as the result of the sin of *Adam*, or to *Christ* as the result of the sins of men, or to believers as the result of the righteousness of *Christ*?

Upon the whole, I conclude, the imputation of *Adam's* first sin to his offspring, the imputation of our sins to *Christ*, and imputation of his righteousness to us, which are so often used by our protestant divines, may be very well understood in a scriptural sense, or a sense much favoured by scripture, according to the common ideas and notions which people have of one person's suffering for the sins or crimes of another, or one person's receiving special benefits for the good deeds of another, as appears in the beginning of this essay, without running into needless cavils or controversies, into improper language, and dangerous extremes.

And in general, I may make this just inference: If we would but allow the expressions of scripture, or the plain and obvious sense and meaning of those expressions the same candour of interpretation as we allow to all men who write of civil or historical subjects in the like cases, and not cavil at them in common writings, we might sufficiently enter into the sense and meaning of God in his word, and find a greater uniformity in our sentiments: And we should also abound more in charity and love towards each other, if any lesser difficulties and darkness should remain upon our minds, and should lead us to some differences of opinion and expression about these subjects.

T H E
T H I R D E S S A Y.

V I Z.

On the guilt and defilement of sin, and how far they may be transferred to others.

IN order to clear the doctrine of imputed sin from all further difficulties, it may be proper to enter into a disquisition of the true sense of those words, viz. "sin, guilt, and defilement,"* which are frequently made use of in scripture, and in the common language of christians: Let us try to clear them from all ambiguity, by setting the several distinct senses in which they are used in a perspicuous light.

Sin is the most general name for all manner of moral evil, and in it's general or abstract nature, or rather the sinfulness of it, is "want of conformity to the law of God in the things which that law requires, or the transgression of that law in those things which it forbids;" and thus it includes both the sins of omission and sins of commission.

Again, Sin is to be considered as it is a principle or habit in the mind, which inclines us to break the law of God; or as it appears in the actions of life, which are actual transgressions or violations of this law.

Yet further, there are two things to be considered in sin, viz. the real and the relative evil of it.

First, The real evil of sin consists in it's hurtful nature and evil qualities, whether it be considered in the habits of the mind, or in the actions of life. Let us survey them both briefly.

The real evil of sin is that disorder in the habits, or principles, or powers of the soul, which inclines it to act contrary to the holy nature, perfections and image of God, as well as against his law. It is a disorder also in these very actions, as they are contrary to the nature of God, defacing his image, spoiling the soul's original rectitude

* Though the abstract substantives guilt and defilement are not much used in scripture in our translation, yet I presume none will be so weak as to object against my representation of them as scripture-language, since their conjugates or derivatives, "guilty, guiltiness, guiltless, defile, defiled," &c. are frequently used.

restitute, breaking the true order of things, and destroying the truest happiness of man*.

This disorder in the soul, or it's principles of action, is called in scripture, "lust, concupiscence, corruption, sin that dwells in us, the body of death, the flesh, the carnal mind, the law of sin, and the law in the members." The same disorder in the actions of life makes them be called "sins, abominations, iniquity, wickedness, evil works or ways," &c.

I add yet further, sin considered as a real evil, and a disorder of heart and life, hath it's natural effects and consequences following it, such as pain or anguish of conscience, self-vexation, shame, &c.

Secondly, Let us consider the relative evil of sin. This consists more particularly in it's respect to the governing authority and law of God; it is a contrariety to the precepts of that law, partly in the very principles and habits of the soul, as well as in the actions of life †.

But as this relative evil chiefly belongs to sinful actions, it is more properly an actual opposition to, or violation of God's righteous law, and so it subjects the sinner to the punishment which that law threatens ‡.

The terms of "unrighteousness, disobedience, trespass and transgression" are sometimes applied to this relative evil of sin in the actions of life in scripture, or more properly it is called guilt, or guiltiness before God, and it signifies our liability to punishment because of sin.

As the real evil of sin hath it's natural effects and consequences on the sinner; so the punishment which the law threatens may be called the legal consequence of sin, and includes pain, misery, or death inflicted upon sinners.

Again, as the relative evil of sin is removed by pardon through the atonement of *Christ*, so the real evil of it is removed by sanctification by the holy Spirit. The first changes our condemned state into reconciliation with God; the last changes our sinful nature and temper into the image of God and holiness.

Perhaps some person may object against this scheme, and say, all the evil that is in sin is relative, for the mere natural action abstracted from all it's relations hath no real evil in it; therefore this distribution of the relative and real evil of sin is not just and proper. I answer,

Answer. Sin considered as a bad principle in the soul, or as a bad action in life, is indeed a real evil, for it hath many positive evil qualities and natural evil effects, which all mankind know and feel, and which are too many to be reckoned up; but the abstract idea of sin, or rather the sinfulness of any action, is granted to be relative, because it consists in a want of conformity to the law of God.

I grant also that sin may in some sense be called a relative evil, because it bears a contrariety to the image of God, as well as it consists in a contrariety to the law of God. Yet since sin in the heart or in the life, in habit or in act, is a real bad quality, and is contrary to the image of God, and naturally tends to ruin a soul by destroying

* As virtue and holiness are the true rectitude and order of the human soul, when all it's powers are in proper subjection to God, and harmony with each other; so sin is properly the disorder of it, when the inferior powers of appetite and affection rebel against the superior and guiding powers of reason and conscience, and the will and passions are not kept in their due obedience to the creator.

† The apostle *John* describes it thus, 1 *John* iii. 4. ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία, "sin is unlawfulness," which our translators have called the "transgression of the law."

‡ I say, the relative evil of sin belongs chiefly to sinful actions, rather than to the habits and principles of sin in the soul, because I take the evil inclinations of the heart prompting us to act contrary to the law of God, to be part of the real evil of sin: And besides I do not remember the word guilt, which is the proper relative evil of sin, is ever in scripture ascribed to the habit or principle of sin without the act.

stroying it's good qualities, it's holy rectitude or holiness, it's peace and happiness, as well as legally by subjecting it to punishment; I chuse to call that disorder which hath such a real and natural tendency to spoil God's image and our happiness, the real evil of sin: and I would call it's demerit or desert of death, or it's legal subjection of us to punishment, the relative evil: And I desire leave to do so at present, that I may not admit confusion into this discourse, and may prevent all contention about words.

The general term sin in scripture is frequently used to signify sometimes the relative, and sometimes the real evil of it. It is used promiscuously and indifferently in the old testament and in the new, both for the sinful disorder of our hearts and lives, and also for the demerit or punishment of some sinful action. It is used for the opposition that is in sin to the holy nature of God, and to the soul's real happiness, as well as for the opposition of it to the law of God, and it's subjecting us to the legal penalty.

Now let us consider what is the guilt of sin, and what is it's defilement, and distinguish them as far as scripture and common speech admits.

First, we will enquire into the meaning of the guilt of sin; and this will afford us the following observations.

Observation I. The words "guilt" and "guilty," in their original and most proper sense, denote the relation of a sinful action or person to some law, and the obligation which the sinner lies under to make satisfaction to the law, by suffering some penalty. The *english* word is supposed to be derived from the *saxon* word "gild" a tax or fine; and "gildan" is a person obliged, or liable to make amends, or pay for a fault committed.

In the learned languages it hath the same sense. "Reus" and "reatus" in *latin*, and *ενοχος* and *ενοχνη* in the *greek*, seem to be entirely confined in their significations to the relation or situation in which the sinner stands with regard to the law, and represent a person bound to answer for a fault or transgression of the law.

So our guilt or guiltiness before God, originally and properly denotes the relative evil of sin, or it's transgression of the law, and the sinner's obligation to make amends for it by suffering some penalty.

Observation II. It must be granted that the word guilt by some writers has been distinguished into these two senses, viz. there is a guilt of the fault, which is called "reatus culpæ," and there is a guilt of the punishment, which is usually termed "reatus pœnæ." And thus the term guilt or guiltiness, is applied to a person three ways. Sometimes it signifies his having done the crime, or the sinful action, as when we say a man is guilty of blasphemy, that is, he blasphemed: Sometimes it denotes his demerit or desert of the punishment threatened, and at other times it means only the legal subjection of a person to punishment thereby; as when we say, the blasphemer is guilty of death, we mean he has deserved it, or at least he is liable to it.

Observation III. Observe also, that by using this word in these three distinct senses, we are led sometimes to mingle and unite all these senses in one; and so in the word guilt we sometimes include some idea of the actual fault or crime, and the personal demerit of the sinner, as well as it's legal subjection of him to punishment; yet it is not always used in all these senses, but always in one or other of them.

Observation IV. Observe further, that we never say a man is guilty of the fault, but when he is the actual personal sinner, and has deserved the punishment: But he may be said to bear the guilt of sin, or have the guilt laid on him, when he is made

liable or subject to the punishment by the imputation of sin to him, according to any righteous compact or constitution, though he be not the personal or actual sinner, nor has merited punishment himself.

Observation V. When we speak of the guilt of conscience, or a guilty conscience, it means that sensible grief, or anguish of soul, which arises from a painful consciousness or remembrance of our having committed sin against God and his law; and so it includes in it not only the fear and terror of the punishing justice of God, which is a legal consequent of sin, but also the shame that arises from our having done amiss, and from our unfitness to appear before a God of holiness under that sinful disorder, which is a natural consequent or effect of sin. This guilt of conscience belongs only to the personal offender, and can never be transferred by imputation to another.

But in the main, I think we may determine, that this word, the guilt of sin, or of a sinful action, as it was originally designed, so is much more frequently, and more obviously used and understood concerning the legal consequent of that sin, or it's just subjection of the sinner to punishment, which is it's relative evil, than it is concerning the disorder of the sinful action, or the real evil of it. And indeed this is the only thing in sin which can be transferred and imputed to any other person, that is, the obligation to suffer the penalty, or to make amends for the violation of the law.

In the following part of this discourse therefore, when I use the word guilt, I desire to be understood chiefly, or only, concerning that liability, obligation, or subjection to punishment under which sin may bring any man, whether it be actually and personally committed by himself, or whether it be transferred to him only by imputation. The use of words in different senses, and as including different ideas, has been often an unhappy spring of confusion and mistake, which we should avoid as much as we can, by confining words to a particular sense*.

Now

* Here let it be observed, that languages are at first formed by the bulk of mankind, who have not any great solicitude to secure the sense of each word, and confine it to one proper idea: and when different ideas approach near to one another, the same word is often used by them for two or three ideas, especially since mankind hath many more ideas than there are words in any language whatsoever to represent or signify them. And hereby it happens, that ideas running into one another by so near an approximation, the words that signify them, though they might be at first different, yet by degrees they run into one another's meaning, and bring much confusion into our conception of things. The words guilt, sin, demerit, are instances of this.

Let it be added also, that the figurative and metaphorical way of speaking is introduced into any language, by endeavouring to describe spiritual ideas by some resemblance to sensible and corporeal things: And though this may give a brightness and force, beauty and sensibility to the expression, where the ideas are perfectly known, yet it is too often in danger of introducing some mistake and error into the minds of those who afterward heard and read it. The words filth and pollution, &c. will evidence this.

If you ask, why this sort of language, with it's various defects and dangers of mistake, is made use of by the sacred writers in scripture, the answer is obvious: The scripture was written for the bulk of mankind, who are not called to enter into accuracies and nice punctilio's, and therefore it must speak their language, that it may be the better understood by them, how imperfect and ambiguous soever it may happen to be. And besides, as the use of figures and metaphors brightens and aggrandizes the things they represent, so the holy writers saw it necessary to represent their important ideas in the brightest and strongest images, and figures, and sensibilities, to strike the minds of the people with their great importance. And this was the custom also of eastern writers.

Therefore in explaining the scriptures, as well as other writings, in a clear and distinct manner, if we would speak more exactly and accurately concerning things, and guard against every mistake in a
critical

Now let us consider what is the filth or defilement of sin.

The filthiness, pollution, or defilement of sin, which is so frequently mentioned in scripture, is not any third thing really distinct from the two forementioned evils of sin, viz. the guilt of it, and the disorderly nature of it, that is, the relative and the real evil: Defilement is only a metaphor used by the Spirit of God sometimes to express one of these, viz. the legal guilt, but much more frequently to signify the other, viz. the criminal disorder; even as the word sin itself is used to denote both the relative and the real evil of it, viz. the legal guilt, and the moral or criminal disorder.

The words defilement and pollution, are mere figures borrowed from things of the body, and applied to the soul, which is a spirit, and which in a strict and proper sense cannot be defiled. A body is said to be defiled, when it has something of a baser nature mingled with it or cast upon it, or when a body is so tainted and corrupted, that it becomes offensive to our senses: and this bodily filth many times is removed by passing through the water, or through the fire, whereby the body attains it's primitive purity either in whole or in part. Now because there are some things in sin which are it's proper evils, that bear a resemblance to bodily defilements, therefore the same word is metaphorically applied to the sins of the soul.

But since it is but a metaphor, a figure, or impropriety of speech, it must have something literal and proper which is signified thereby: Now all that I know of, that can be called the proper evil of sin, is either relative or real, and consists either in the guilt, or in the disorder of it. I have no idea or conception of any thing different from these two, when I use the word defilement or pollution: And we must not abuse ourselves with scripture-metaphors and figurative words, instead of real ideas, nor persuade ourselves into a fancy of more realities than there are or can be in nature. This would be to dishonour scripture instead of explaining of it.

If I were to prove that these are the two only ideas in which we find the terms of filthiness, defilement, or pollution, used in scripture, or in our best writers on sacred subjects, I might confirm it these three ways.

I. If we consider the effects which are represented to flow from the defilement of sin, they are all such as may be attributed either to the guilt or to the disorder of it.

1. The holy scripture and our divines represent the filth or defilement of sin, as that which makes us offensive to God, as any corporeal defiled thing is offensive to ourselves. Now it is the guilt of sin that makes us offensive to the divine justice, for that is the attribute that vindicates the honour of his law, and executes the penalty upon those that have broken it, and are become guilty. And it is the disorderly nature of sin, whether in our hearts, or in our actions, that makes us offensive to the divine holiness; for sin in this sense is a contrariety to his holy nature, to all his moral perfections, his complete rectitude, his goodness, and his truth: It is in this sense, "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," *Hab. i. 13.* He will not let those come into his presence with ap-

A a a 2

probation

critical and distinct explication of them, we should endeavour to keep the same ideas to the same words as far as ever we can; and having distinguished the different senses in which a word hath been used, we should confine, as far as possible, one word to one meaning, or idea only.

probation, whose hearts or lives are defiled, that is, under sinful disorders. This was typified by the levitical pollutions of old, when some bodily defilement excluded the *israelites* from the camp, and the tabernacle where God dwelt: He dwelt there in his majesty and justice, and threatened death to defiled persons that came near his altar, to represent his punishment of the guilt of sin; he dwelt there in his holiness, and commanded them to stand at a distance, to shew that the disorderly nature of sin made persons unfit to converse with God. Thus all the ceremonial pollutions of the *Jews* typified one of these two, either the guilt of sin, or it's disorder and viciousity.

2. The defilement of sin is represented as producing shame and fear in the sinner in the presence of God. A person in forbidden and defiled garments, or besmeared with mire and nastiness, is afraid to come into the presence of his prince, a wise and just governor, as well as ashamed to appear before him as a person of high dignity. Now one of these is the effect of the guilt of sin; the other of it's disorder. A sinner fears the justice and majesty of God, because of his guilt, and the injury he has done to the divine law; he knows he is liable to death, he sees his own defilement and God's justice, and is afraid and trembles. A sinner, in his sinful disorder of soul, is also ashamed in the presence of a holy God, seeing every thing in the divine nature so contrary to his own heart and his own actions, being defiled, that is, disordered by sin. Thus the guilt of sin produces fear, and the disorder of sin produces shame.

A parallel might be drawn in this instance also between the levitical defilements of the flesh and the more spiritual evils of sin. The mere suggestion of this thought is sufficient for those who are acquainted with the mosaical ceremonies, and the representations of God, as dwelling in the holy of holies, in the glories of his justice and holiness.

3. The defilement of sin sometimes is represented as debasing the nature of the soul, and rendering it vile. *Psal. xlix. 20.* "A man without understanding, that is, without the fear or love of God, or true holiness, is mean and vile, as the beasts that perish:" This arises from the inward pravity or real evil that is in it. Vicious disorders either in heart or life, debase the character of a creature; but under this idea the guilt of sin, or relative evil of it, is not contained, but only the disorder, or the real evil: But still it is plain that this representation always means the one or the other.

II. Another way to prove that the defilement of sin is no third thing distinct from the guilt and the disorder of it, may be this.

The methods or means of removing the defilement of sin are such as are suited to remove either the guilt or the disorder of it.

1. Washing is the most general means to remove bodily defilements; and this is a metaphor which the scripture abounds in sometimes to express the removal of guilt by atonement and pardon, and sometimes the removal of the disorder of sin in our souls by sanctification. When we are said to be "washed by the blood of Christ from our sins," *Rev. i. 5.* there the defilement implied must signify guilt: But when we are said to be washed and cleansed from a sinful nature, by "having the Spirit of God poured upon us, or by being sprinkled with clean water," *Ija. xliv. 3. Ezek. xxxvi. 25.* which is done in baptism and regeneration; or when we are bid to "wash us and to make us clean," *Ija. i. 16.*

in

in these places the defilement which is implied must signify the sinful disorders of our natures and lives.

This also is very evident in the levitical methods of cleansing the typical defilements of old: sometimes the blood of the sacrifice was to be put on persons defiled, to signify the removal of guilt by the death of *Christ* the great sacrifice: sometimes they were to be washed in clean water, to signify the removal of the inward moral disorder of sin by the sanctifying Spirit.

2. Another method of removing bodily defilements is by fire; so silver and gold passing through the fire lose their dross and impurity, and are refined and made pure: Now when the defilement of sin is represented as removed by fire, sometimes it signifies the removing the disorderly temper and qualities of mind, by the Spirit of God, or by afflictive providences; see *Mal.* iii. 2. "He is like a refiner's fire: He shall purify the sons of *Levi*, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." *Zech.* xiii. 9. "And I will bring a third part of them through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined."

This was typified by the levitical purifications: The gold and other metals that were under legal or typical defilements, by having been abused to idolatry by heathens, must pass through the fire to be cleansed and fitted for the use of God's holy people, and his holy temple, *Numb.* xxxi. 23. whereas those materials which could not bear the fire were to be purified by water for the same service.

In the sixth chapter of the prophecy of *Isaiab*, where he gives an account of his complaint in the presence of the Lord, "I am a man of unclean lips: Woe is me, for I am undone, my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts, a seraph took a live coal from the altar of burnt-offering, and laid it upon his mouth, and said, lo this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquity is taken away; thy sin is purged." It is hard to say whether this chiefly refers to a pardon of the guilt of past sins of the tongue, or a purification of his lips and heart from sinful disorders. But it is certainly one or both these.

In the last place, I might add another proof that the defilement of sin is not any thing different both from the guilt and the disorder of sin, if we consider, that when the guilt of sin is removed by pardon and justification, and the disorder or evil qualities of sin are removed perfectly by sanctification, what is there remaining that can be hurtful to man or offensive to God? It is possible in the nature of things, that the guilt of sin and all obligations to punishment may be taken away from a person by pardoning grace, and yet the impurity or sinful disorder of the soul may remain. It is possible also that the sinfulness or the moral disorder and evil qualities of the soul may be removed by sanctifying grace, and yet the guilt of past sins may remain: But where divine grace hath both pardoned and sanctified the soul completely, there remains no more moral defilement, no sinful pollution, nothing more that can give us either fear or shame, whether we appear before God in the justice of his government, or in the holiness of his nature. This defilement therefore appears evidently to be nothing but a figure of speech borrowed from material things, whereby either the guilt, or the disorder of sin, the relative or real evil of it are represented.

Now though this metaphor of the defilement of sin may sometimes signify the guilt, sometimes the disorderly nature of it, yet let it be noted, that the scripture, in it's common forms of speech, does, I think, more frequently use or imply the metaphor

metaphor of filth or pollution * to signify the inherent disorder or real evil that is in sin, than the guilt or relative evil of it; and I believe we may so understand it in most places where such kind of metaphors are used: and consequently when we use this metaphor of defilement, pollution, &c. we should rather apply it to the pravity and disorder of sin than to the guilt of it.

And particularly let it be observed, that wheresoever the guilt of sin and the defilement of sin are mentioned together in the writings of our divines, and represented as distinct and different things, there the guilt evidently signifies that offence against the divine law which subjects us to punishment; and the defilement must mean only that evil quality in sin which is contrary to the divine nature or holiness, which makes us unlike to God, and unfit for his presence, service or enjoyment.

If this explication of the filth or defilement of sin be admitted, that it sometimes may signify the relative evil, but more frequently and properly the real evil of sin, it will be easy to answer those perplexing questions which some persons have raised about this subject, viz.

Question I. Can the defilement of *Adam's* first sin be transferred to his offspring by imputation?

Answer. If we will speak of the defilement of sin to express the guilt of it, or it's relative evil, which exposes us to the just anger of God and to punishment, according to the threatenings of his law; it is evident by the foregoing discourses in this book, that it may be imputed to us, for we suffer a thousand painful evils and death at the end of them for the sin of *Adam*.

But if by the defilement of sin we mean as we rather ought to do in accurate speech the real evil of it, or it's disorderly nature and contrariety to the image of God in the soul, and as spoiling the best powers of man, unfitting us for converse with God, and naturally tending to our destruction and misery, this is not properly imputed to us from *Adam*; but this sinful nature is really transferred or derived from *Adam* to us by the laws of generation or propagation which were given at first to man, as in question vi, and vii.

And thence it comes to pass that original sin is divided by our divines into imputed and inherent: the one is relative, and subjects us to the misery threatened, the other is real, and makes us actually sinful.

Question II. How far was our Lord *Jesus Christ* our great surety concerned in the filth or defilement of our sin?

Some pronounce it boldly that he took upon him the filth and pollution of our sins, though at the same time they mistake and suppose it to mean something really distinct from the guilt. Others again renounce and abominate that thought, lest *Christ* should be represented as defiled with sin; but at the same time they give no fair account or intelligible notion of the filth of sin, distinct from the guilt of it, that guilt which was certainly imputed to *Christ*, when "he was made sin for us," and when "he bore our sins in his body on the cursed tree." 2 *Cor.* v. 21. 1 *Pet.* ii. 24.

I think

* Note, I think these express words or substantives, pollution, &c. are scarce ever used in scripture, or in human writings, to signify merely the guilt of sin, or the obligation to punishment, without carrying in them the idea of the real evil or disorder, or culpable demerit of sin.

I think it is evident from many scriptures*, that our legal subjection to punishment and misery by the guilt of sin, which is the relative evil of it, was imputed or transferred to *Christ*, and he took it away by offering himself a sacrifice of atonement or expiation, which hath procured pardoning mercy for us: but neither scripture nor reason will allow that the moral disorder of sin, the vicious impurity or criminal pollution, or real evil of it, was transferred any way to our blessed Saviour, the "holy one of God, who knew no sin." While men of controversy deal much in metaphors they fight in the dark; but if we could persuade them to turn these metaphors into proper expressions, and bring the disputants into clear and open light, they would contend no more.

If we would speak more distinctly and accurately, and without a figure on this subject, I think we should not indulge ourselves to say the "guilt of sin cannot be transferred by imputation, or that the defilement of sin may be imputed to another," for either of these will be ready to lead those who hear us into some mistake; since, in my opinion, it is evident that the guilt of *Adam's* sin, or it's subjection of the sinner to punishment, was imputed to us, and thereby we are born in sufferings. It is also evident that the guilt of our sins was imputed to *Christ*, for which he suffered and obtained our pardon; but the disorder or evil nature and qualities of sin, which are transmitted to us from *Adam* by natural propagation, can never be imputed to our blessed Saviour, nor transferred to him any way whatsoever.

Yet to express my charity for all sincere enquirers after truth, I would lay down this conclusion, that if such a sincere, humble and diligent enquirer will neither acknowledge the guilt of sin capable of being transferred to another by imputation, nor the defilement or sinfulness of nature to be conveyed by propagation, I will not be angry with him, while he allows what I think the sense of scripture incontestably reveals and maintains, viz. that we justly suffer for the sin of *Adam* in the providence and righteous government of God, that hereby the children of *Adam* are born with inclinations to sin, and that *Jesus Christ* the Son of God was justly made an offering for our sins, being with his own consent devoted to death for us sinners by God the Father.

If christians will but acknowledge the first *Adam* was our head, who some way conveyed unto us natural life, sinful inclinations, diseases and death, according to some righteous divine constitution or covenant, and that *Jesus Christ*, the second *Adam*, was also our better head, who conveys to us spiritual life, pardon and justification, resurrection from the dead, and immortality by a new and better covenant; and if they practise the faith, repentance and new obedience of the gospel, peace be with them all, and everlasting grace in my sincerest wishes, though they do not subscribe to all my words, nor speak precisely the same language with me. Grace and peace be with all those for ever that honestly seek the truths of God, and love our Lord *Jesus Christ* in sincerity. Amen.

* Several scriptures tells us, that "*Christ* bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that he was made sin for us, that all our iniquities were laid upon him, that he bare the sins of many, that his soul was made an offering for sin, &c." Now what is it in or of sin that he bare or took upon him. if not the guilt of it, or our obligation to punishment; or suffering thereby, when he willingly became our surety? there is nothing else of sin that he could be charged or burdened with, or that could be imputed to him, or reckoned to his account, and for which he actually made atonement by his suffering, and so took away this guilt of sin.

P O S T S C R I P T
To these E S S A Y S

SOME of the doctrines maintained in this book depend upon a right notion of imputed sin, or a translation of guilt and punishment from one person to another, which I have explained at large in the second and third essay: But there are some writers in the present age who have asserted, that as guilt is intirely personal and can never be transferred, so innocence and punishment are inconsistent ideas: and consequently no sin of *Adam* can be punished upon his posterity, nor can they be justly laid under misery for any sins of their father: Nor can the sins of any part of mankind be punished upon *Jesus Christ*, the mediator.

Those great and eminent writers the learned *Grotius* and doctor *Stillingfleet*, in their defenses of the satisfaction of *Christ*, suppose the actual desert of punishment to be personal and inseparable from the agent or actual sinner; but they suppose still that the guilt or obligation to punishment may be transferred from one person to another; that is to say, sin may be imputed as to the punishment thereof to persons who did not actually commit that sin. I suppose all men will allow those authors were very well acquainted with the civil law, as well as with the light of nature, and the reason of things; and I must acknowledge I fall in with their sentiments as most consistent with reason and scripture.

But a certain learned and ingenious writer, who opposes them in these sentiments, maintains, that "there is no such thing as an obligation to punishment, but what consists in a real desert of punishment; nor is there any real guilt but what is personal; and that the punishment of an innocent person, whether with or without his consent, is not only a violation of truth, but is a moral contradiction, for he is no subject of punishment in any respect. No right can be in the universe to punish the innocent, unless there can be a right to violate truth and equity. To punish an innocent person, would be treating him directly contrary to what he is, which is as manifest a violation of truth as can well be conceived." Therefore some infer that the posterity of *Adam* can never be punished for his sin, nor could our Saviour be punished for the sins of mankind*.

He grants indeed, that the scripture uses these terms of "*Christ*'s bearing our sins, that he was wounded for our transgressions, and the iniquity of us all was laid upon him," with many other expressions of the like nature: But these expressions, he says, are merely figurative, for strictly speaking, he could no more bear our punishment, than he could bear our iniquity, or become sin for us, being both

* See "an essay on redemption, being the second part of divine rectitude," page 3—30; by Mr. *John Balguy*.

both alike essentially repugnant in a literal sense to the truth and nature of things.

Thus I have set this objection in the strongest light, and almost in the author's own words; and yet I think it may be effectually answered in this manner.

Answer I. This ingenious author's assertions concerning "guilt, obligation to punishment, and translation of this obligation, and vicarious punishment" of one for the sins of another, &c. are plainly contrary to the common sense and practice of mankind, who often punish the crimes of parents on the children, and of offenders on their sureties. This is known more especially by those who are conversant with the civil law on these subjects; I think therefore such assertions ought not to influence our assent, without most evident proof, any more than the assertions of doctor *Stillingfleet* and *Grotius*, and many other writers upon this theme, who express themselves in direct contradiction to what this author maintains.

Is it not a thing very commonly practised amongst men, that the children are banished or disinherited of their father's estate, and become poor and miserable for the sake of their father's treason, or other crimes? Is not something of this kind done in almost every nation, without any complaint of injustice, and without any censure upon the magistrate on this account? And why should it be esteemed utterly unjust in things sacred, that the great God should impute sin to the posterity of *Adam*, by bringing misery and death upon them? Or that he should impute the sins of mankind to his Son *Jesus Christ*, who was a voluntary surety, and punish them upon him, which is acknowledged to be the plain natural and literal sense of the expressions of scripture? But we are told, these must be figures and metaphors, because this author does not allow the literal sense to be consistent with truth and justice.

Answer II. This argument for the same reason would forbid any rewards to be given to families and posterity, upon the account of great and worthy actions performed by the ancestors: For when the son or grandson of some eminent patriot, or deliverer of his country, has the honours of nobility paid him, which were first given to his father upon his personal merit, this is as much contrary to truth, and as much a falsehood in fact, as if the treasons of a father were punished upon a son. This son or grandson did never perform these glorious and honourable services himself, which is evidently known to the world, and yet the rewards being continued to them, seem to say, that this son or grandson did perform them, in the same sense as this author supposes sufficient to contradict truth, and to destroy all imputation of guilt to another. The translation of rewards in this manner, is as contrary to truth in fact as a translation of penalties.

Answer III. The force of this argument seems to be all taken from the late Mr. *Woolaston's* supposed foundation of moral virtue and religion, which is built entirely upon natural or logical truth, in his book of "the religion of nature delineated." Truth, as he supposes, may be expressed in actions as well as in words; and consequently, that all such actions as do not represent things exactly in their natural or logical truth, are falsehoods in fact, or a sort of lies, and therefore unlawful and unjust; being contrary to truth, they are contrary to morality, religion and justice. But this notion of Mr. *Woolaston* has never yet been proved to be true, though there are many excellent sentiments found in that treatise.

It is not evident, that God has any where, either by the light of reason or revelation, told us, that actions have the same power to distinguish and determine veracity and falsehood as words have. It has always been granted by our best casuists, that simulation in action, that is, a feint, or disguise, or a mere appearance, or counterfeit

of things, may be often good and virtuous, where dissimulation, however it be explained, or falsehood in words, is never lawful or virtuous. But this notion of Mr. *Woolaston* tends to bring in much superstition, that is, to make more sins than God hath forbidden, and more duties than God hath prescribed, by making all simulation in action to be unlawful. And if ever that general doctrine should obtain, it stands in need of many cautions and limitations to guard our consciences from endless scruples, or from intrrenching upon morality and truth at every turn.

I say yet further, This doctrine seems to forbid all the common conduct even of wise and good men, in covering or disguising any action or design in the civil life, even though the same was practised by our Saviour or his apostles: It renders all stratagems in war immoral and unlawful, even though appointed by God himself. Let us survey this matter a little.

When God ordered *Joshua* and all *Israel* to lay an ambush behind the city of *A*, and when by *Joshua's* command they fled from the battle, and made as if they were beaten, *Josb.* viii. 2, 15. were they guilty of such a falsehood in fact, by their flying when they were not afraid, as turns this action into immorality, or made it unlawful?

When *Gideon* with three hundred men, whom God had chosen for this purpose, broke their pitchers, discovered their lamps, and sounded their trumpets, *Judg.* vii. 16. whereby the host of *Midian* were led to believe that there were three hundred troops or companies rather than three hundred men; was *Gideon* guilty of such a falsehood in fact, as should turn this stratagem into iniquity?

When our blessed Saviour, *Luke* xxiv. 28. walking with some of his disciples toward a village, made as though he would have gone further, did he exert any action by this simulation, which was inconsistent with truth or righteousness? And yet I know not how it can be defended by Mr. *Woolaston's* principles.

When Saint *Paul* became as a *jew* among the *jeus*, and as a gentile among the gentiles, *1 Cor.* ix. 20, 21. When he took a vow upon him, and purified himself, *Acts* xxi. 23,—26. When he circumcised *Timothy*, *Acts* xvi. 3. Did he falsify truth so as to become criminal?

But to come nearer to the present controversy: When the prophet *Elisba* pronounced a leprosy upon *Gebazi* and his seed, for the gross crime of his lying and covetousness, *2 Kings* v. 27. and when this curse was inflicted upon any of his posterity; did this event say to the world, that these children of *Gebazi* were guilty of such covetousness and lying too? Or was it not consistent with divine veracity to inflict such a curse?

When *Phinehas* had executed judgment by slaying two idolaters, and God gave him and his seed the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, *Numb.* xxv. 11, 13. and his children were successively made priests, was here any criminal falsehood in fact, as though each of these children had performed that glorious execution against idolatry?

When the seed of *Abraham* and *Jacob* met with many successive blessings from God, upon the account of the special acts of their faith and obedience, which were promised to be thus rewarded; did these numerous blessings on the *Israelites* declare to the world, that each of these private persons so blessed were actual performers of those acts of faith and obedience? Or was there any criminal falsehood that belonged to these providences?

In short, a number of such instances might be cited, wherein it is sufficiently evident, that the doctrine of imputed sin and imputed righteousness is by no means to be

be charged with those consequences, which learned men who follow this scheme would cast upon them.

It may be queried also, whether this learned author doth not allow, that we are pardoned and made happy on the account of what *Christ* hath done and suffered, so that the benefit is transferred to us who have never done the meritorious actions? Is this perfectly consistent with the truth of things?

He will say indeed, "That all our blessings are properly a reward to *Christ*:" But since the reward terminates upon us, may it not justly occasion a doubt, whether this be entirely agreeable to the sentiment of truth and falsehood in actions as the test of all morality and justice?

It must be acknowledged to the honour of this reverend author, who has espoused this notion of *Mr. Woollaston's*, that he hath argued with just reason and unanswerable force against the deists of the age, and in vindication of the "divine rectitude in creation and providence;" and he hath very ingeniously and happily proved in this same treatise, that "mere repentance and new obedience are not a sufficient ground for sinners to claim pardon and acceptance with God," the universal governor of the world: But if any such writers should proceed upon these sentiments of *Mr. Woollaston*, to demolish the divine doctrines of the "translation of guilt, and of vicarious punishment; of our suffering misery and death on the account of the sin of *Adam*; and of *Christ's* being a proper sacrifice for the sins of men in his death, and bearing their sins so as to make atonement for them;" I ask leave, with all the respect I bear to their character, to yield up neither my faith, nor my reason to their assertions.

A N
E · S S A Y
O N T H E
F R E E D O M o f W I L L
I N
G O D a n d i n C R E A T U R E S .

A N D O N
Various subjects connected therewith.

V I Z .

The ideas of LIBERTY and NECESSITY ;
The causes of the determination of the will; the use of the
understanding to direct, not to determine it ;
The liberty of GOD as a creator, a governor, and a
benefactor ;
The doctrine of FATALITY ; the spring of moral good and
evil ; the difference between moral and positive laws ;
The sin and fall of man, and the free grace of GOD ;
The rewardableness of faith in the gospel, and the criminal na-
ture of infidelity.

111

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF WORK

1911

BY JOHN D. COCKROFT

AND

EDWARD D. SUTHERLAND

1911

; yruvzoni lna yruvzoni to callied
 sht to sht sht gllw sht to noimimimim sht to sht sht
 ; sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht
 s lna sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht
 ; sht sht
 lna sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht
 ; sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht
 sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht
 sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht
 ; sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht sht

A N
E S S A Y
O N

The freedom of will in GOD and in
CREATURES.

S E C T I O N I.

Of liberty and necessity, and how far they are consistent.

LIBERTY is a word which has been attributed to ideas very distinct and different; and necessity has also it's various significations: hence proceeds that confusion and seeming inconsistency which sometimes appears among our thoughts, and may have been found perhaps in some writings on this subject; nor is it easy to avoid it in an argument of so much difficulty: And therefore I bespeak the candor of the reader while I am attempting to strike a little light into a theme, which has been surrounded with much darkness and perplexity.

I shall not run into a wild chace of all the distinctions of necessity which the schools have taught us: but it seems to be needful for us to take notice in general, that a thing is called necessary, when it must be so, and cannot be otherwise, whatsoever be the reason and cause of this necessity.

If the cause or reason of this necessity arise from the very nature of the thing, it is called an internal or natural necessity; so a bowl may be said necessarily to roll down a hill: and a beast necessarily to avoid the fire, or to quench it's thirst when a fountain is near. But if this necessity arise from some apparent outward constraint or restraint, then it is called an external or forcible necessity: Thus a bowl is driven up hill by the force of a stroke impelling it; or a beast necessarily goes through the fire when he is constrained or dragged into it by outward force; or an ox necessarily abstains from drink when he is withheld by bars or fetters from a neighbouring fountain. What other distinctions of necessity are needful, will afterwards appear.

Liberty stands generally in opposition to necessity of each kind, both inward and outward; both a necessity of nature, and a necessity of force: and that is certainly the best and most proper sense of it, yet there seem to be some cases wherein those

those actions which are necessary, have also been called free : and if we would make a more careful enquiry into this matter, we must take a brief survey of the different sorts or kinds of liberty, that is, the different cases to which this word is applied, and then we may better judge how far necessity is consistent or inconsistent with it.

I. Liberty or freedom may be attributed in a figurative sense to inanimate beings; so we say by way of simile, free as the air or wind. It is yet a little more properly applied to animals; so a bird released from its cage is free, or a horse from his bridle or harness. All manner of outward necessity, that is, restraint or constraint, is inconsistent with this freedom of brute creatures. But there are some actions which a beast performs with a kind of brutal freedom, and yet by a sort of natural necessity also. A horse naturally avoids the fire by an inward necessity, though he doth it freely, that is, with all the freedom he has: and when he is thirsty, he freely drinks, yet it is by an inward or natural necessity, where nothing restrains him.

But leaving these ideas of a less proper freedom, let us rather consider liberty in its more proper sense, as it belongs to men or other intelligent creatures, or to God himself, who is the Creator.

II. Liberty, as ascribed to intellectual beings, is either moral or natural. Natural liberty has various ideas, as will appear immediately. Moral liberty is a freedom from all superior authority: in this sense, God alone is universally and perfectly free, having no authority superior to himself. But there are many instances of particular moral freedom among men; an apprentice is free from the authority of his master when he has served seven years; and the lad is free from the government of his tutor when his childhood is past, and he commences man. It is no longer necessary that the apprentice should obey his master's commands, nor the youth those of his tutor, which it was morally necessary or plain duty for them to obey before. In this moral sense, necessity or restraint and liberty are evidently inconsistent.

III. Natural liberty must be distinguished into a liberty of volition, or a liberty of action: The first is a liberty of the will, the last is rather a liberty of the executive powers*. It is this freedom of volition or chusing which is properly the liberty of an intelligent being, and the chief subject of dispute, and not the freedom of the inferior powers from restraint or constraint in acting or executing the determinations of the will. There are many cases wherein the will may be free to chuse, but the man is not free to act. The freedom of the will is very consistent with the restraint of action: so a person whose mouth is stopped, may be willing or chuse either to speak or to keep silence; and he is free in this choice, so far as the volition goes; but he is not free to act, for he hath not power to speak if he did chuse it; he is under a necessity to keep silence. Suppose *Simon* and *Lepidus* were locked up in prison with their friend *Crato*: *Lepidus* chuses to go out, but cannot, and is uneasy; *Simon* chuses to tarry there, and there he tarrys cheerfully: They are equally free in their different choice and volition; but both are under a necessity to act the same thing, viz. to abide in prison, one according to his choice, the other against it.

IV.

* Note, When action is contradistinguished from volition, I mean chiefly the action or motion of the inferior and executive powers; for in the nature of things, the will is the chief agent, and volition is action in the properest sense; but I fear it deviates too much from the sense of mankind to permit the words action and agent to be applied only to the will, and to nothing else, as some writers have done in this controversy. However, it is but a debate about words.

IV. The liberty of the will is generally distinguished by writers on this subject, into a liberty of indifference or choice, and a liberty of spontaneity or voluntariness.

Actions of the soul are said to be free with this spontaneous or voluntary freedom, when the soul of man pursues any object or performs any act, or chuses any pleasure, without any consideration whether it can chuse any other object, or perform the contrary action. This is a most large and extensive sense of the word liberty; for in this sense every act of the will is and must be free, for every act is spontaneous or voluntary; and indeed this freedom of the will seems to be but a dilute idea, for it signifies scarce any thing more than it is an act of the will. So we are said with the greatest freedom to do those actions to which we have the strongest inclination, and wherein we take the greatest pleasure; not considering or enquiring whether these actions are necessary or no: that consideration does not come into this notion of liberty. It is a common instance in this case, that all sensible beings with spontaneity and freedom pursue what they call pleasure or happiness; yet they are generally said to do this by a sort of necessity too, because it belongs to their nature, and they cannot do otherwise. This is attributed to brutes as well as men. And so the blessed above with perfect liberty love God; yet so constantly, that it appears almost natural and necessary. So God with the strongest and most exalted freedom, and yet unchangeably and necessarily, loves himself as the highest good, and pursues his own glory as the noblest end. Every necessary and immanent action that God doth with regard to himself, and many transient actions towards his creatures, are perfectly spontaneous and free with an absolute liberty of this kind; and yet perhaps he cannot do otherwise, that is, his will naturally and eternally and unchangeably determines itself to these actions; he freely and necessarily consults himself in all his designs, and decrees and always acts agreeably to his own perfections; he is freely and necessarily just and true to his creatures.

I know some great writers distinguish here between a natural and a moral necessity, and call all those actions of the will which are really natural, as well as constant, certain and universal, such as acts of truth, and justice in God, morally necessary; and will allow scarce any thing to be naturally necessary but what belongs to matter, or to the mere passive, or perceptive powers of a spirit: I grant indeed, that the will, which is influenced by rational motives, is not under such a sort of influence in it's actions as bodies are, because bodies are mechanically moved; yet the necessity may be as strong and unalterable: and if it be the very nature of God to act justly and faithfully, so that he cannot will, nor act otherwise, it may be called, I think, a natural necessity, since it springs from his nature; as well as it may be called a moral one, because it is the action of an intelligent and free agent.

Now let us enquire what is a liberty of choice or of indifference. Though necessary actions are sometimes said to be free, when they are done thus spontaneously, as I have described, yet a liberty of choice or indifference in things not necessary is the more common sense in which the word liberty is used: This is the second branch of this fourth distinction, and this implies a "power to chuse or refuse", to chuse

* Here note, I do not describe liberty of choice or indifference, as many have done, by a power to act, or not to act, but a power to chuse or refuse; for there is a great deal of difference between a freedom of willing or chusing, and a freedom of acting what we chuse, as I have shewn before: and much darkness and confusion is brought in upon this subject of liberty, by not keeping this distinction clear. Perhaps that great man, Mr. Locke, had writ more perspicuously on this subject, if he had always maintained this distinction, for he describes liberty, a power to act or not to act, &c.

one thing or another among several things which are proposed, without any inward or outward restraint, force or constraining bias or influence. So I feel myself at liberty, and I chuse to stand or walk; I am free, and chuse either to speak or keep silence, to point upward or downward; I chuse one egg and refuse another out of two that are offered. Man is free whether he will chuse to honour God his maker, or dishonour him; to do good to his neighbour, or do him hurt; to keep himself sober, or to make himself drunk: In all these things he may chuse or refuse which he pleases. This is what the schools call "*libertas indifferentiæ ad opposita*," that is, a liberty of indifference to chuse one thing, or it's opposite.

This liberty is utterly inconsistent with all necessity, whether natural or forcible, that is, with all necessity of every kind: whatsoever is any way necessary, or imposed or constrained, cannot in this sense be called free. Whensoever the will is necessarily determined to any act or object by any thing without or within itself, it has not a liberty of choice or indifference; for upon this supposition of it's being necessarily determined to one thing, it is evident that it could not chuse the contrary.

V. In the last place, liberty or freedom of the will is either absolute and perfect, or imperfect and comparative.

When we chuse or determine any thing without any manner of constraint on one side, or restraint on the other; when we act or determine one way, without any reluctance or any bias toward the contrary side, this is called absolute and perfect freedom: so God chuses to be just and true; so a wise being chuses to follow the dictates of reason wheresoever they appear; so every sensible being is said to chuse and pursue in general what it calls pleasure or happiness, though sometimes it mistakes wherein happiness consists, and follows instead of it a shadow or mischief.

Comparative liberty or freedom is when the mind has some inward reluctance or aversion to those actions which yet it wills to perform for other more prevailing reasons; or when it has an inward inclination and desire to do some action which yet it wills to neglect, being powerfully impelled by other considerations: so a malefactor may be said freely or voluntarily to go to his execution; for though he has an inward aversion to it, yet he chuses it comparatively, that is, rather than to be dragged thither by force: so a sick man is comparatively free in chusing to drink a bitter potion rather than to bear continued sickness.

Now this sort of volition in common speech is sometimes said not to be free, because the man doth not absolutely chuse this, but only prefers a less evil to a greater; and the words, not free, in this place signify only a less degree of freedom. Men are ready to conclude in this case, that because in common speaking the man was constrained, or, as it were, necessitated to go to the gibbet by a superior motive, therefore he went not freely; though indeed it was an act of choice, or comparative freedom, that is, rather than be dragged: And, by this way of speaking, viz. that he went not freely, we come also to imagine that freedom and necessity are utterly inconsistent things: yet it is plain that though here was a sort of necessity or constraint, yet the man was free and voluntary in his own act.

It is no wonder now that there should be such contests and controversies about the nature of liberty, or the use of the word, since it plainly appears that the words not free sometimes signify only less free; and since the same action may be said at the same time to be not free, that is, absolutely, because we do it with some reluctance; and yet it is said to be free, that is, comparatively, because we do it at last voluntarily, and prefer it before something worse.

We may also take occasion to remark, that if such actions which are not done with a full freedom may be called comparatively free, then there can be no voluntary

tary acts, or acts of the will, but have some natural freedom also, that is, at least a comparative freedom: for the will cannot act without so much freedom as this is; and consequently the will itself cannot be really compelled, but natural freedom or liberty will still belong to it in all possible actions; though not always a liberty of choice or indifference.

After all this debate, I will readily acknowledge, that some of these disputes, whether such and such actions are free or no, are rather disputes about words than things: And if the world would all agree to confine the words liberty and freedom, to signify nothing but a freedom of choice, a liberty of indifference, or a power to chuse or refuse, which is inconsistent with any necessity of choice, and which must be allowed to be the most usual sense of it, I should be so far from disapproving of it, that I think it would be the best way of speaking and writing. And therefore I give notice here, that I shall chiefly use the word freedom in this sense in the following sections. If we could but always confine every term to one certain determinate idea, we should gain and preserve much clearer ideas of things; we should make much swifter and larger advances in knowledge; we should cut off a thousand occasions of mistake, and take away a multitude of controversies. But when we are enquiring, what is liberty or freedom, which in the present sense and use of the word among mankind is applied to various cases, we must not explain the word so as utterly to exclude any spontaneous actions, or actions of the will, which men have frequently called free, though they also may appear necessary, or in some sense constrained.

Among other remarks on this subject, it is proper also to take notice, that our judging concerning the truth or falsehood, fitness or unfitness, good or evil of things, is generally ascribed to that power of the soul which is called the mind or understanding: And because when we pass a judgment, we have no power to judge otherwise than as things appear to the mind at that time, therefore judgment is called a necessary thing; and indeed judgment is but an assent or dissent of the mind, as things appear true or false to the mind; and on this account it is supposed to have no freedom or liberty belonging to it. But if we will make a careful observation of what passes in the transactions of the soul on these occasions, we shall find that though the mind cannot assent or dissent, cannot judge of things contrary to what they plainly appear, yet the will has a great deal to do in our judgments concerning objects proposed to the mind.

The will is sometimes led by appetite or passion, and has an inclination to chuse a particular object, and then it wishes that object to be fit and good: It readily yields to the prejudices that lie on that side, it fixes the mind upon those arguments, which tend to prove what it wishes, and turns the thoughts away from those evidences, which lie on the other side of the question, and does not suffer them to be brought into full view and comparison; and thus secretly it influences the soul to judge the thing it desires to be good or fit, that is, to assent to those arguments, which are brought to prove it's fitness, keeping the contrary arguments much out of sight. It is an old *roman* proverb, "*Quod volumus facile credimus,*" "We easily believe that which we wish to be true." There is indeed a secret dishonesty and insincerity in this conduct, though we are not willing to take notice of it.

The will also has power to hasten and precipitate our fixed assent or dissent to propositions in the mind, and to hurry on the judgment to determine concerning the fitness or goodness of things upon a slight and insufficient view. The soul of man is soon tired and weary of suspense, and the will hastening to choice and action

before due evidence, is really guilty of that rash judgment and rash action: For the will has power to withhold the assent in many cases, and to delay the judgment where things do not appear to the mind with full and bright evidence, and to set the mind upon searching further, and viewing the object again on all sides, before it judges concerning it's truth, fitness, or goodness: And by this means the will may take care that the soul pass a juster judgment on things, after a fuller and longer survey of them. And even where things appear with a pretty good degree of evidence, the will is able to delay our assent, and withhold it for a season; as for instance, if any learned and knowing friend stand by and warn us of danger and mistake, and bid us take heed of assenting too soon, lest we are imposed upon by false appearances, the will is able to prolong the delay of the judgment, and to withhold it from pronouncing upon the fitness or goodness of that object.

Let it be observed, that I do not alter our common forms of speech, nor attribute judgment to the will, though indeed it seems to be some determining operation of the soul, consequent to the appearances of ideas in the mind; and therefore it is not merely what some great writers have represented it, viz. "feeling what we feel, or hearing what we hear;" for we can suspend and delay our assent or judgment, even when a good degree of evidence appears to the mind; and we are also led sometimes to give a stronger or weaker assent, according to the inclinations of the will, or desires of the heart, neither of which can be properly said with regard to feeling or hearing.

I say again, I will not directly call judging an act of choice or voluntary operation; and yet there is so much of this kind of operation in the soul exerted about it's passing a judgment on things, that I think we must agree that the will has a great deal to do in it: and therefore the errors, derived from these wilful rash judgments, have something criminal in them, as well as they lead us into further criminal actions. And were not this the true account of things, I cannot see how faith or unbelief of the gospel could have any thing in them worthy either of praise or blame: But this is only a hint by the way.

Mr. *Locke* in his essay, book II. chapter 21. section 47. after some other representations of human liberty, which seem not to be perfectly just, represents it to consist much in a power of delaying the execution of our desires, or suspending the acts of volition or choice, until the man has diligently examined on all sides what is best: Now this no doubt is a very great part of human liberty; and *Des Cartes*, the french philosopher, with good appearance of reason, makes this power of suspending the acts of the soul to extend to our assent to truth, as well as to the pursuit of good; and therefore he proceeds so far, as to make judgment rather to belong to the will, and to be justly laudable or blame-worthy. Mr. *Locke* seems also to come pretty near to the opinion which I have proposed; as appears in the prosecution of this discourse of his about our judgments of good and evil, and our choice and practice consequent thereon; on which subject he has many excellent thoughts in morality.

SECTION

S E C T I O N II.

What determines the will to chuse or act.

LET us now consider the human will in the common sense of it, as that power of the soul whereby we chuse or refuse what is proposed to the mind. The usual principles which are supposed by philosophers to be causes of the determination of the will to act, in chusing one thing, or in refusing another, are chiefly these three, viz. The greatest apparent good as it is discovered to the mind, or the last dictate of the understanding, or the removal of some uneasiness. Let us consider these three particularly.

First, "the greatest apparent good." This does not properly mean moral good or virtue, but natural good, or that which most conduces to our ease, pleasure or happiness. Now this greatest apparent natural good as it is discovered to the understanding, and considered as the cause which certainly influences and determines the will, doth not differ really from the last assent or dictate of the understanding * considered in this same view of influence: for it is the last assent of the understanding concerning the apparent goodness of a thing which is supposed to determine the will to chuse it, and therefore these two are really but one thing under different names or appearances; and as such I shall consider them.

Now among other evidences or proofs that the greatest apparent good does not always determine the will to chuse or act, I shall mention but these three.

1. If the greatest apparent good always and necessarily determines the will to chuse it, then the will is never free with a liberty of choice or indifference; for things placed in such a certain view, or seen in such a certain light, will necessarily appear to that individual understanding, and at that time in such a particular manner, viz. as fit or unfit, as good or evil, as a greater or lesser good; and consequently such appearances to the understanding, will, according to this hypothesis, necessarily determine the will to chuse this greatest appearing good. And this is the very scheme of the fatalists, whereby they prove all human actions to be necessary, and that there is no such thing as freedom of choice in any intelligent being whatsoever: And according to this hypothesis, it will not be easy to give a fair and satisfactory answer to the arguments which the fatalists bring against all our notions of moral good and evil, if all human actions are in this manner necessary: But of this more hereafter.

2. The greatest apparent good does not always determine the will; for there are many persons convinced that future happiness pursued in a way of piety and virtue, is really the greatest natural good: this appears very plain to their understanding, and yet their will chuses present sensualities and vicious pleasures, and pursues them in opposition to this greatest apparent good, and the last dictate of their understanding about it. The power of the will to chuse and act in this case continues the same after the last dictate of the understanding as it did before; and in weak and foolish creatures, the will sometimes exerts this power by acting and chusing contrary to it.

Some indeed will say, that in this case the mind or understanding being influenced and blinded by sensual appetite, makes a rash judgement, and then the understand-

ing

* The last assent of the understanding perhaps is a better term, because the last dictate seems to denote too much of action, whereas the understanding is represented properly as a passive power.

ing finally dictates, that for this present moment vicious pleasure is the greatest good, and is to be preferred; and so the will pursues it.

But I rather think it is the violence of appetite or passion that many times biases and inclines the will strongly, yet not necessarily, to follow vicious pleasure; and this it does without changing the dictate of the understanding, or convictions of the mind about the greatest apparent good, but rather overpowering them by present influences; according to the old poet, "video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor." Ask the vicious man, when he wills and chuses to pursue his lusts contrary to the convictions of his mind and conscience, whether his conscience be not still convinced that it is better to pursue virtue, that is, not only morally better, or more agreeable to the will of God, but it is naturally better as it conduces to a greater natural good, or final happiness: and he will frequently confess it, that considered as a natural good, the practice of virtue, with all its consequences of future or final happiness, is better than vice with its consequences of final misery: But his strong passions and present appetites hurry on his will to chuse vice before virtue, and thus contradict the dictates of the understanding or conscience concerning the greatest apparent good, both natural and moral. Mr. *Locke*, in his essay, book II. chapter 21. sections 35, 38, 43, 44. talks more copiously on this subject, and confirms what I have here expressed.

And let it be considered, that if things be not as I have here represented them, but if on the contrary the will cannot chuse vice unless the last dictate of the understanding determine that vice is at present the greatest apparent good, or vice is to be preferred and pursued, and if then the will must obey the understanding, and chuse sensual vices; then there is no such thing as sin against the convictions of the mind, or the last dictates of the understanding: which is a very absurd proposition, and contrary to all experience; and it frees the criminal from all blame even in the sight of God, who has formed his nature and his powers in this connexion.

3. My last reason to prove that the last dictate of the understanding, or the greatest apparent good, does not always determine the will, is, because sometimes two things are proposed to the will, wherein the understanding can give no dictate, because it sees no manner of difference, or at least no superior fitness, nor can possibly represent one as a greater good than another; and here the will cannot be determined by the understanding. Of this I shall say more afterward.

Other philosophers, and particularly Mr. *Locke* supposes uneasiness to be the great principle of all the determinations of the will. See his essay, book II. chapter 21. section 29, 33—39. But I think it may be proved that the will is not always determined by some uneasiness, as I shall shew immediately: yet by the way I may take notice, that wheresoever uneasiness doth determine the will, this does very little differ from the former principle, viz. that it is determined by the greatest apparent good; for this uneasiness proceeds, as Mr. *Locke* confesses, from the absence of some natural good; and the will determines itself to pursue this absent good, in order to remove this uneasiness. Thus it is good apprehended by the mind in its last dictates, that in these cases is still supposed to determine and direct the will.

Or thus: The removal of this present uneasiness is itself the greatest apparent good, and if the will be determined to act thus or thus for the removal of this present uneasiness, then it is still determined by the greatest apparent good.

In the 33. and 42. section, Mr. *Locke* himself grants, that it is "good that determines the will, though not immediately;" and his doctrine seems to be this, viz. that good, as it is apt to produce ease and pleasure in us, is the object of our desire; and

and it is this desire of good, raised by the present uneasiness in the want of it, that determines the will. Does it not then follow, that uneasiness is the remote mover of the will, and desire of good the proxime mover of it? I see no great difference betwixt this and the common opinion, nor ground enough for that great opposition between his doctrine in this point, and the common doctrine, which he seems to represent in two whole sections; for in the acts of the mind which are instantaneous, and many, as it were, are sometimes crowded into a moment, such as an uneasiness under the absence of good, and a desire of it's presence, &c. it is difficult sometimes to say, this or that is first or last: However in this place it is the view and desire of good is allowed to be the next and most immediate mover of the will, I think, by Mr. *Locke's* own arguing.

Mr. *Lee*, in his notes upon Mr. *Locke*, gives some probable arguments against his opinion, and proves that uneasiness is not the sole motive to voluntary actions.

This uneasiness, saith he, is a trouble, a kind of pain, a natural evil, and seems rather to be the spring of animal actions and of vicious acts, than of such as are exercises of virtue, and piety, and charity; and thus it is rather the motive to the wills of the worst or meanest of men, than to noble and virtuous spirits. So the fear of evil is the motive to the vilest of men to various actions and abstinences; but love to do as well as receive good, moves the best-constituted minds.

This doctrine of uneasiness seems to govern the actions of men by the principle of brutes, for they are carried by hunger and thirst and uneasiness towards their natural actions: therefore it is more honourable and safe to ascribe at least all virtuous actions to a diviner principle.

To this, let me add another reason or two, to make it more evident that this uneasiness can never be the universal and constant cause of determining the will.

Suppose a man is pleased, and easy, and perfectly satisfied in his present circumstances, be it in his present habitation, in his company, in his manner of life, in his trade and business, or any thing else; I would ask, What is it determines him to will his continuance in these circumstances, his abiding in the same habitation, his conversing with the same company, &c.? Is it any uneasiness that determines him? Is it not rather his present easiness and sense of pleasure that moves him to will the continuance of his present ease? And Mr. *Locke* confesses this in section 34. Now I would ask whether a will to continue be not a volition, as well as a will to change.

Again, Is it uneasiness that determines the blessed God, and all the holy and happy spirits in heaven, to do what they do? Would it not have a profane sound to say, that present uneasiness determined God to make beasts and men, birds and flowers, to create a heaven and an earth? Can we believe that present uneasiness determines every angel to chuse and love God the chief good, or to will the several actions wherein he obeys his maker, and executes his orders? Or that it is some present uneasiness that causes the saints in heaven to perform their several acts of duty and adoration, or to will their continuance in the service and enjoyment of God?

Upon the whole, it is granted that these three principles, viz. "The greatest apparent good, the last dictate of the understanding, or the removal of present uneasiness," whether you suppose them distinct or the same, may have a persuasive influence so far as to prevail upon and to incline the will of men to far the greatest part of their volitions or acts of choice. But we have proved that these are not the universal and certain or necessary principles of all the will's determinations.

Let us enquire now whether there are not many instances wherein the will is determined neither by present uneasiness, nor by the greatest apparent good, nor by the

the last dictate of the understanding, nor by any thing else," but merely by itself as a sovereign and self-determining power of the soul: or whether the soul does not will this or that action in some cases, not by any other influence but because it will, and perhaps to shew it's own sovereignty or self-determining power. Let us put this case: Suppose I have a mind to prove to an atheist, or a fatalist, that I am a free being, for I can turn my face to the south or the north, I can point with my finger upward or downward, just as I please, and according as my soul wills; and that I have a power to will and chuse which of these motions I shall perform: Now if to demonstrate this freedom, I determine to move my finger upward, or turn my face to the north, it is not because I was under any present uneasiness by standing still without motion; nor was the pointing upward or the looking northward a greater apparent good than looking to the south or pointing downward: Nor could my understanding dictate one rather than the other: but it was a mere arbitrary volition, to shew that I have within me this self-determining power. And thus in some cases the will determines it's own actions in a very sovereign manner because it will, and without a reason borrowed from the understanding; and hereby it discovers it's own perfect power of choice rising from within itself, and free from all influence or restraint of any kind. And perhaps this may be as good a way to resolve some difficulties that relate to the actions of choice, and liberty of the will, either in God or in man, as any other laborious methods of solution which have not attained the desired success, nor satisfied the inquiring part of mankind. I will not deny but that I am indebted to archbishop King in his treatise of "the origin of evil," many years ago, for my first thoughts of this kind: And in my review of these papers, I am confirmed in these sentiments by an *english* translation of that book in quarto, with ingenious notes upon it by a writer who conceals his name, printed 1731*. Though I ask leave in some points to differ from the sentiments of the archbishop in that treatise.

S E C T I O N III.

The will is a self-determining power.

LET us see whether this doctrine of the self-determining power of the will may not be formed into a regular scheme, attended with various advantages, and guarded against the most formidable objections, in the following manner.

Proposition I. In every spirit or thinking being, whether perfect or imperfect, finite or infinite, there are two such principles or powers as may properly be distinguished by our conceptions, into the understanding and the will.

These are by no means to be conceived as two real substances or proper distinct beings; for it is one and the same spirit that both understands and wills: and yet we have very clear and distinct ideas of these two principles or powers of agency in ourselves, viz. We have a power of perceiving and assenting to truth, and of seeing and taking notice of the fitness or unfitness, the goodness or evil of things; this is called the understanding, or sometimes the mind: And we have also a power of willing or chusing one thing, and refusing another, of preferring one thing before another, of determining our choice to one thing rather than another; and this is called the will.

As

* Since this was written, there is another edition of that book in octavo, with valuable amplifications and corrections, and the learned author, Mr. *Edmund Law*, has no longer concealed his name.

As we are evidently and strongly conscious of these powers in ourselves, so we reasonably ascribe the same to other spirits, supposing them to be of a similar constitution: And we are taught also to form the same ideas of God, our maker, whom the light of nature and scripture represent to us as a spirit, and we are made after his image, as well as are his offspring, *John* iv. 24. *Gen.* i. 26. *Acts* xvii. 28.

Proposition II. The eternal reason and nature of things seems to point out this practical truth to us, or rather this rule of action, viz. that where a being is possessed of two such powers, one of them, viz. the understanding, which perceives the fitness or unfitness, good or evil of things, should be a director or guide to the other power which is active, viz. the will, that it may regulate and determine it's actions wisely, and chuse and refuse objects proposed to it according to the fitness or unfitness, good or evil which is discovered by the understanding: And that wheresoever greater degrees of fitness or goodness are discovered by the understanding in any object, there also the will should determine it's choice rather than to objects less fit, or less good.

Proposition III. But where there is no such superior fitness or goodness in things, or where it cannot be discovered by the understanding, but the objects which are proposed appear equally fit or good, there the will is left without a guide or director: And therefore it must make it's own choice only by it's own determination, it being properly a self-determining power. And in such cases the will does as it were make a good to itself by it's own choice, that is, creates it's own pleasure or delight in this self-chosen good; though it be not abstractly and in itself better, that is, fitter than it was before: Even as a man by seizing upon a spot of unoccupied land in an uninhabited country makes it his own possession and property, and as such rejoices in it. Where things were indifferent before, the will finds nothing to make them more agreeable than they were, considered merely in themselves, besides the pleasure it feels arising from it's own choice, and it's perseverance therein. We love many things which we have chosen, and purely because we chose them.

Let us survey these two cases supposed in the second and third propositions a little more particularly. And, first, let us consider the case where some superior fitness or goodness doth appear to the understanding.

Proposition IV. If the thinking being or spirit be wise or perfect, then it will act according to that eternal rule of action which rises from reason and the nature of things; that is, whatsoever the understanding apprehends and judges to have a greater or superior fitness or goodness in it, the will being guided by the understanding, prefers and determines itself to chuse it, and refuseth the things that appear less fit, as well as those which are unfit or evil. This it doth constantly and certainly, so far as the being is wise; for this is one chief thing wherein consists the perfection or wisdom of a spirit, viz. to chuse and prefer what appears to be fit and good above what is unfit or evil, and also to chuse that which is better or more fit, above that which has less fitness or goodness.

Proposition V. Though the will of intelligent beings is generally and should be always led or influenced by the greatest fitness and goodness of things wheresoever it appears to the understanding, yet it is not necessarily and absolutely determined thereby: for the will of an unwise being may possibly determine itself without regard to the understanding, and even contrary to what the mind judges to be fit or good.

And it may do this many ways, viz. by negligence, by sudden humour, caprice, or wantonness: The will through these influences may suddenly and rashly prefer

evil to good, or that which is less fit to what is more fit. Or the will may be tempted and led away to chuse what is not really good, by the enticing and soliciting powers of strong appetite or passion, contrary to the judgment of the understanding. It is true indeed, the will may chuse and determine to resist those importunate passions, but it is true also that it may obey them without regarding the mind, or in opposition to the better dictates of the understanding: For though the mind is given us for a director or adviser, yet not as an absolute lord or ruler. It is the will that is properly the moral principle or agent within us, the proper subject of virtue or vice, and therefore it must be a free and a self-determining power, and must chuse of itself, whether it will follow reason or appetite, judgment or passion.

And therefore it is, that whensoever the will determines contrary to the dictates of the understanding or conscience, it is both unwise and highly criminal, because such a spirit acts directly contrary to the light or law of nature, the great rule of reason, and the appearing fitness of things: And this gives just occasion to sharp reproaches and torments of conscience, when the will has determined contrary to the dictates of conscience, that is, of the understanding.

Proposition VI. Though sins against conscience are too frequently committed, yet the chief reason why imperfect beings so often chuse unfit or evil things, and prefer them to what are fit and good, is not merely from this negligent humour, or a wanton and capricious turn of the will, or the mere compliance with violent appetite or passion in determining it's choice contrary to appearing fitness or goodness, as represented by the understanding; but it arises perhaps most frequently from the understanding apprehending and judging some things to be fit or good upon a slight view of them, which really are not so, and from the will's inclination or wish, through the false bias of appetite or passion, that such a thing should be fit and good, before mature examination, and from it's determining to search no farther; the will precipitates the judgment, hurries it into error, and acts and chuses rashly upon present slight appearances.

And indeed in this case the will, which might yet longer suspend the judgment by putting the understanding upon a farther search, is criminal in permitting a judgment to pass on things upon such slight appearances of fitness or goodness, and determining it's choice according to them, instead of delay, and further search and enquiry.

Mankind, of whom I chiefly speak here, are often led astray in this matter by the false representations which passion and appetite, sense and fancy make of things to the understanding. We commit many mistakes about the fitness or goodness of things, by seeing them in a deceiving situation, in a false light, and under a disguise; by beholding things but in part and in an imperfect manner, by the numerous prejudices of many kinds that lead imperfect creatures astray in their judgment of things. And we are generally too ready to pass a rash and hasty judgment and determination of what is fit and good, before a thorough examination. We soon grow weary of a state of suspense and doubt about the fitness or goodness of things: and there is often found an impatience in the will to determine itself one way or another with speed, as well as an inclination that such a thing should appear fit and good according to the bias of sense and appetite; and thus it often chuses evil instead of good.

Proposition VII. Indeed, if we happen to pass a false judgment from the mere imperfection of our natural capacities, or under the influence of any of these prejudices which we had no manner of means nor power to resist or subdue; this mistake

et

of judgment, and the unhappy choice of the will according to it, seem to be innocent, and merit no blame.

But when we give up ourselves to a rash determination of judgment or choice under such prejudices as might be resisted, or when we yield to this impatience of the will, and wilfully neglect a further search where we might have justly delayed, and searched further, and by this means our will prefers real evil to good, or chuses things less fit before things which are more fit, we herein become culpable: And this faultiness hath greater or less degrees, according to the different opportunities, advantages, and capacities we had to examine, judge, and chuse aright.

And let it be observed, that as unwise spirits determine amiss in their judgment and choice of things, through haste or rashness, or through a sudden and strong bias of appetite or passion, &c. so a spirit which is wise may, through unwatchfulness, suffer itself to be betrayed into such a rash and false judgment, and such an unhappy and criminal action, and chuse evil instead of good. And perhaps this was the true spring of the fall of man from his state of innocence, and the entrance of sin into the world.

Hitherto we have spoken chiefly concerning the determination and choice of the will in those cases where the understanding represents one thing as fitter and better than another: But let us now consider the case supposed in the third proposition, where there is no such superior fitness or goodness, or where it doth not appear to the understanding.

Proposition VIII. There may be several things proposed to the understanding even of a wise and knowing, but imperfect, spirit, wherein the superior fitness or unfitness is concealed, and doth not sufficiently appear to the understanding, so as to give any just and certain direction to the will which of them to chuse or refuse. In some cases it is plain that the understanding, after all proper surveys and inquiries, is left in perfect suspense about the greater or lesser fitness of things, and the will may be perfectly indifferent to them: And yet the will may without fault or folly determine itself to chuse the one or the other: as for instance, if I am hungry, and two pieces of bread, or two cakes lie before me, which appear to be equally good for food, at equal distance from me, and in all other circumstances have no discernable inequality, so that I am intirely indifferent to either of them in particular, yet my will may determine itself to chuse and eat one of them to satisfy my hunger; but which of the two I shall chuse must be determined by the mere act of my will, for I cannot stay a hour in suspense and trifling inquiries. Perhaps one of these pieces of bread might be really in itself much fitter for my nourishment than the other; or, perhaps there might be secret poison in the one, and not in the other; but I knew it not; they were equal to me in appearance, and therefore I was not led to determine my choice by any superior appearance of fitness or goodness; yet my will determined itself to chuse one of them because it is a self-determining power, and hath perfect freedom of choice within itself: and herein there is nothing foolish or criminal, even though I should happen to be poisoned by it, by taking that piece which was unfit for my nourishment.

Proposition IX. As there may be several things proposed to a very wise and intelligent being, wherein he can discern no superior fitness or goodness, so there may be some things proposed wherein there is really no superior fitness or goodness at all; yet it may be fit at particular seasons that one of them should be chosen. This is a common case; as when two bricks, suppose them called A and B, lie before a builder, which are equally fit to fill up such a vacancy in the wall, and both lie equally

near his hand, and are equal in every other appearing circumstance; the builder must not stay a hour to debate with himself, and to determine which brick to chuse for filling up this vacancy; that would be folly indeed: But his will freely and of itself chuses the brick A, merely because he will, and leaves B, or refuses it: Then, as I hinted before, this brick A becomes so far better by his chusing it, as that he approves of it in it's place in the building above any other, and delights in his own choice or work.

Or take another instance: Suppose a man be desired to shew his power in self-determination, or of pointing with his finger, and he points to the north, or to the east, to the heavens or to the earth; here is no superior fitness or unfitness in the one or the other, but he points upward, or northward, as he pleases; his will determines for no other reason but because he will, and hereby shews his own self-determining power in all this; though it be perfectly arbitrary, yet there is nothing foolish or faulty.

We may find instances of this kind in moral actions as well as natural: Suppose God requires *Abraham* to offer a lamb out of his flock in sacrifice, and *Abraham* taking a survey of the twenty fattest lambs of his flock, cannot find which is the best of them; his own will must finally determine and chuse any one of them for the altar. Or let it be supposed that I have ten farthings in my purse, and I meet with a dozen beggars, all so equally poor and miserable, that I cannot discern which is the most or which is the least indigent: I must necessarily leave two of these men out of my distribution, but my understanding cannot direct me which these two are, nor can it tell me which are the ten fittest objects of my charity. What can determine my choice here but my own will by it's self-determining power?

The understanding in such instances as these, has no pretence of power to direct or determine the will, because it sees no superior fitness, and the will would be forever undetermined, if it did not determine itself.

S E C T I O N I V .

How the will of God determines itself.

NOW let us try to apply these things to the great and blessed God in his counsels and actions; always remembering, that when we speak of these divine and unsearchable themes, we do not pretend nor assume so much as to determine that things must be literally just so transacted in the divine counsels, but that we speak of God as acting according to the manner of men, and so far as our ideas can reach those sublimities.

Proposition X. The great God, whose understanding is perfect, sees all the real and possible fitnesses and unfitnesses, good or evil, which are in things, as they are contained in his own eternal ideas: He beholds all that is fit or unfit, whether the things themselves are actually existent, or only possible, because he sees all the infinite relations of things to one another with all their consequences in a simultaneous and comprehensive view.

Here note, that I do not meddle with the debate whether there can be any fitness or goodness in things antecedent to or abstracted from the being of a God. Had there not been a God, there had never actually existed such real fitnesses, nor such ideas at all. Yet it is certain we may conceive of such fitnesses antecedently to our conception of the being of a God. This is plain and evident, that God is eternal, and

his

his ideas are eternal, and these fitnesses of things also are eternal: and perhaps these fitnesses of things can have no original existence nor eternity but in the divine ideas, and consequently are included in the unchangeable nature of God.

And this is one argument whereby, as I remember, the late ingenious Mr. *Norris* somewhere proves the being of a God, viz. that there are certain eternal truths or propositions, natural, mathematical and moral, such as, "three and three make six; two parallel lines will never meet; the whole is greater than any of its parts; and God is to be honoured by his intelligent creatures." Now these eternal unchangeable truths are not a mere nothing, and therefore they must have an eternal existence somewhere, and this cannot be but in some eternal mind, which is God. But however that matter be resolved, this is certain, that all these eternal fitnesses lie open to the divine mind, and are part of his unchangeable ideas, which is all that my present argument requires.

Proposition XI. When we consider or speak of the decrees of God, or his determinations what he will do, or what he will not do, we are constrained to acknowledge that his will always chuses and determines to act what is fit and good: that is, in our way of conceiving, wheresoever there is an eternal fitness or unfitness, good or evil in things, he always determines to act according to this fitness, and this goodness; for to act an unfit thing would be unwise, and to act a thing which is evil, would not be good; whereas the blessed God is perfectly wise and perfectly good in all his works and his decrees, in his creation and providence, and government of the world; he is faithful to his promises, he is righteous and just in his determinations; he is kind in his conduct towards his creatures so far as the rules of wisdom and justice admit: Nor is it possible that God should be or act otherwise than according to this fitness, where there is any fitness or goodness in things, since these eternal and unchangeable fitnesses exist in his ideas, and for God to act against them, would be unfit and unwise, and unbecoming the character and nature of a God.

Proposition XII. For the same reason his will exerting itself in a way of government, determines all the rules of moral virtue and piety for the practice of his creatures, according to the original and eternal fitness of things, wheresoever there is such an eternal fitness. As for instance, that "God our creator is to be honoured and loved, and worshipped, and obeyed; that promises and contracts are to be fulfilled; that one man must not take away another man's life or property by force or fraud," &c. All which are moral propositions of eternal truth.

Proposition XIII. God has made these moral rules known to men to be his will two ways, viz. by reason and by revelation.

1. "By reason," that is, by forming their natural powers of thinking and reasoning in such a manner, that when they set themselves to a careful and due consideration of the relation of God to his creatures, and of creatures to one another, they cannot but infer these propositions to be true, and to be most proper rules to govern their practice; and that God, who has formed their reasoning powers in this manner, has hereby made these things their duty. As our reason is so formed, that in natural things it is impossible we should judge otherwise than that "three and three make six, or the whole is greater than a part;" so in moral things we cannot judge otherwise, when we have the idea of a God, than "that God our maker is to be honoured and worshipped," &c. And when our reason judges thus, then it appears to be the will of God, and we are obliged to perform and obey it as our maker's will.

2. "By revelation," or scripture, God has also manifested these rules of moral virtue or natural religion, and thus confirmed the law of nature or dictates of reason, and given

given a double discovery of these duties to those who live where this revelation is published, and a double obligation to the performance of them,

Here let it be observed, that I enter not into the controversy, Whether these moral propositions about eternal fitnesses of things would have the force of laws, and carry any proper obligation with them upon the mind and will of man without the consideration of the existence of God, and of his will thus found out by our reasoning powers. I am rather inclined to think that it is the will of God as manifested by reason or revelation, which lays the true and proper moral obligation on the practice of intelligent creatures; but I avoid the embarrassing my present scheme of thoughts with that dispute. It is evident enough, that in the grand lines of moral virtue and piety there are these eternal fitnesses; and our reasoning powers, when they have found out the being of a God, and our relation to him, must also acknowledge they are so far the will of God, that we are obliged to practise according to these moral fitnesses, these eternal rules of virtue.

Proposition XIV. But there may be several things supposed to come within the view of the divine mind, or the understanding of God, considered as a Creator, which have no real fitness or goodness in themselves, or at least which have all an equal fitness or equal goodness to answer any general or special design of God: And if they are considered in all the various relations in which they stand either to God himself, or to other things in the universe, there is no real superior fitness or goodness in any of them above the rest, so that they appear perfectly indifferent in the divine ideas.

Now in such instances the will of God, as a sovereign agent, has no determination from his own ideas, and therefore in and of itself determines itself to chuse one thing and not another; and, as it were, makes that thing good, that is, makes it pleasing to himself, by his own determination or choice of it. Wheresoever the infinite knowledge of God sees no goodness nor evil in the ideas of things themselves, he can make them so far good by fixing his own free-will and choice upon them, that they then are agreeable and pleasing because of his free choice, which before were entirely indifferent. And I think we may, without injury to the dignity of godhead, suppose him to be better pleased now with those his works which he has actually wrought or determined into actual existence, than with those which he has left in the state of mere possibility, though antecedent to this determination they might be both equally fit or good.

And indeed there seems to be a great number of instances of this kind relating to God and his works: as, What sort of system of beings he would make, and whether minds, bodies, or both; What should be the precise shape, and what the precise place of every corporeal being in the world; Whether this whole universe, or the sun in our system, should have one atom in it more or less; Whether the whole or any part of it should have been created one moment sooner or later; In what precise spot of our solar world *Jupiter* or *Saturn*, or any of their satellites, or this earth or it's moon should be first placed; or whether any of them should have one particle of matter more or less in them, than they have, or this or that particle lie in any other situation; Whether this single atom of mould or clay should be part of the glebe at *Taunton* or *York*, or whether this grain of sand or pebble should be found on the shore of *Deal* or *Dover*, or on the coasts of *Africa* or the *East-Indies**; Whether this particle of water should belong to the *Severn* or the *Thames*, or should

* I have dwelt too long perhaps on such minute and inconsiderable instances as these; but I did it partly to intimate how universally the great God is laid under necessary and minute limitations, if these things were not indifferent; and partly to give occasion to diffuse our thoughts into like instances in the animate, human, and angelic worlds, which perhaps are as little and indifferent in the esteem of God, as these minute inconsiderables are in our esteem.

should be blowing this moment in the *atlantic* or the *mediterranean* sea; or whether this particle of air should be found in *Essex* or *Hertfordshire*, or in *America* on this day, this hour, and this second of time: On what particular branch such a bird should sit at such a minute, and what notes it should sing; and how many leaves should grow on such a bough, and how many indentings on the edge of every leaf; how many colours should glow on the cheek of such a tulip, or yellow seeds lie in the bosom of a rose; whether this particular human soul should be united to a body born in *Lapland* or *Russia*, *Britain* or *China*; or this child should be created for a tall stature or a dwarf, or be brought into the world in the seventh or seventeenth century; whether this drop of rain should fall upon a plowed field or a rock, or this bright sun-beam should light on me or my neighbour, on the earth or the moon: And perhaps ten thousand other things, and that of much greater importance in their consequences, may have no superior fitness or unfitness in themselves, but are all equal and all indifferent. And here the will of God, by and of itself, as a free and sovereign power, determines itself in it's choice, and as it were makes it so far more agreeable and good to himself by his own choice and determination, and he delights in his own will and purpose, and in the correspondent works of his hands.

Proposition XV. When God out of mere sovereignty and good pleasure hath determined by his will to chuse and create one sort of world or system of things out of two or two thousands which perhaps were equally fit, or to make this or that sort of creatures in this world; he then may be said to be led by the nature and relations of those things, and by consequential proper fitnesses which belong to that system, or to those creatures, to determine those things of a natural or moral kind, which are proper for those creatures, or for that system. As for instance: Supposing just such a world to be created as our's is, then perhaps consequentially it must have such laws of motion: Or, if man be created exactly such a being as he is, then it is proper that he should have such ideas, such notions and sentiments, &c. and that he should live under such certain laws and rules of action.

But perhaps several of these are not eternal laws or rules either of nature, or motion, or morality to other sorts of creatures, or other systems which God might have chosen to create. Therefore though we may assert some to be eternal laws or rules for all possible worlds, yet it is hard for us to say in all cases, how far these eternal fitnesses extend. And we have reason enough to suppose that many things even in our present system of nature are not determined from their eternal superior fitness; but that thousands of possibles even in our system might be equally fit in themselves, and it was the will of God, the Creator, that sovereignly chose some particulars above others, and made them actually exist, and behold they are all very good.

Proposition XVI. So when we consider God as a governor in appointing such positive laws and rules of duty for his creatures, which are not contained in the law of nature, there may be instances wherein among a thousand possible rules or laws each of them may be fit, and yet there is no superior fitness in one above the rest: Then the will of God by and of itself determines and chooses what positive laws, what duties he will command or prescribe to his creatures, and he makes the thing which he prescribes more fit and good for us to practise merely by his own choice, determination, and command: as whether the tabernacle of *Moses* should have just such a number of boards or curtains, pins or tacks in it; whether every board or every curtain should be just so long and so broad, to the thousandth part of an inch; whether the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, the red heifer, and the whole burnt-offering on the great day of atonement, should have every the least ceremony of washings, burnings,

burnings, sprinklings, &c. belonging to them, so precisely adjusted in that very form as they are appointed in the books of *Moses*; In short, I wou'd ask whether every point and tittle of every ceremony and positive duty which God has appointed from the beginning of the world to this day, had in itself and in the nature of things, such a superior fitness, that it could not be determined otherwise: Surely it is much more becoming and proper for us to think and say, that God has determined these things by his own will or self-determining power and free choice: For it seems to me a very harsh and bold affirmation, that not one of all these punctilio's could ever have been otherwise appointed by God himself, as we shall take notice immediately.

Proposition XVII. Thus whether we consider man as a natural or a moral agent, and whether we consider God either as a Creator or as a governor, there seem to be several instances wherein there is no superior fitness or unfitness of things, that appears to the understanding to give any direction to the will in it's choice: And as the nature of the will in itself is a power of choice or self-determination, so in these instances it eminently appears that it must be left to determine and chuse for itself without any direction of the understanding.

S E C T I O N V.

The advantages of this scheme of liberty.

THIS scheme of the liberty of the will, and of the spring of it's choice and determination, as residing within itself, has many advantages attending it; and they are such as these.

Advantage I. We are hereby led evidently to a self-moving power, to a principle of motion or proper action in man, which we are conscious of continually, and which we feel and experience in ourselves to be the active spring of those voluntary motions which we excite in our own bodies, and thereby in the bodies that are round about us: And this leads us by fair reasoning to infer, that since we neither did nor could give being to ourselves, to our self-moving powers, or to other creatures, there must be some such supreme self-moving power which is the author and Creator both of bodies and spirits, that is, of all active and passive beings.

Whereas the contrary opinion, which supposes the will to be always necessarily determined by the understanding, and the understanding always determined by the appearances of things, gives us no discovery of any self-moving principle or power in this world; and while the same opinion supposes the will of God to be in the same manner universally, eternally and unalterably moved and determined by the appearances of things in his ideas, and their superior fitness, it gives perhaps too much advantage to the atheist and the sceptic to doubt whether there be any self-moving power at all or no, whether there be any first-moving spirit, that is, a God. This doctrine has in fact been employed to this wretched purpose.

Advantage II. This opinion asserts and attributes the most proper and most rational doctrine of full freedom to every intelligent creature, and conveys a clear idea of their liberty both in those spontaneous actions where the fitness of things so fully and evidently appears, as powerfully to persuade the will, as well as in all other actions where the fitness doth not appear with such full evidence and power, or finally in those things where there is no superior fitness at all appearing. Every action determined by the will of man is free, because the will is a self determining power.

Whereas

Whereas in the other scheme, which supposes that the will of man in every action whatsoever is certainly and necessarily determined by the last dictate or judgment of the understanding, and that the understanding is necessarily determined in it's judgment by present appearances of things as to their fitness or unfitness, there is really no perfect liberty of indifference or freedom of choice left to man, or to any intelligent being in any action: but all is necessary with a natural necessity, all is fate; for nothing can be otherwise than it is: And this opinion has given an unhappy occasion to the principles of the fatalists in all ages.

Advantage III. This scheme of things supposes the truth of what we daily find in common life, that there are many objects and actions which are equal or indifferent to us, and which have no appearing superior fitness or goodness in them; and yet it gives us leave to enjoy the pleasure of any of these indifferent objects or actions by the free choice and self-determining power of the will. Whereas if the will must always be determined in it's choice by some superior appearing goodness or fitness, we could never come to enjoy any of the satisfactions that may arise from these equal and indifferent actions or objects, because we should be held in everlasting suspense between them, as the ass in the problem between two like and equal thistles, and never be able to taste one of them, having nothing that could determine our choice.

Advantage IV. This doctrine of the self-determining power of the will sets the nature and distinction of virtue and vice in this present state in the truest light, together with the rewardable or punishable properties thereof: This shews how acceptable to God are the good actions of men, as being the effects of free choice; the will having always a natural, free and self-determining power of it's own choice, even after things are represented to the understanding in their fitness or unfitness, in their good or evil appearances: And at the same time it lays the fault of every criminal action only upon the creature, by allowing the will to have a natural free power either to determine suddenly and rashly, and to precipitate the judgment concerning the fitness of things, and thus betray itself into a wrong choice; and by allowing it a free power also to suspend the judgment of the understanding in opposition to any slight appearances of fitness or goodness, and to search yet further, and wait for further evidence.

This scheme also fixes the guilt of evil actions entirely on the will of the creature, by ascribing to the will a free power to determine itself, either to chuse or to refuse after any representations of good or evil, fitness or unfitness made by the understanding. This doctrine therefore sets vice and virtue in their true natures, their merit or demerit, and represents them as suited to their different rewards.

Whereas the other scheme, which determines the will always and certainly by the understanding, and determines the understanding by the situation and appearance of things, seems to take away the true nature and distinction of vice and virtue; for the sublimest virtues and the vilest of vices actually practised would rather be matters of fate and necessity, flowing naturally and necessarily from the existence, the circumstances, and present situation of persons and things: For this existence and situation necessarily makes such an appearance to the mind; from this appearance flows a necessary perception and judgment concerning these things; this judgment necessarily determines the will; and thus by this chain of necessary causes virtue and vice would lose their nature, and become natural ideas and necessary things, instead of moral and free actions; and thus there would be nothing really rewardable in the one, or blameable and punishable in the other. This also the atheists and the fatalists have formed into so strong an argument, as it is very difficult to give a fair answer to them, if we

suppose the will to be necessarily determined in every act by the ideas and assent of the understanding.

To confirm this notion of virtue and vice proceeding from the self-determining power of the will; let us consider, that all mankind naturally and constantly suppose the determinations of their wills to be their own actions, whether they be good or evil: for however they might, from a principle of pride and vanity, assume the honour of good actions to themselves, though they were not intirely their own, yet they would not impute evil actions to themselves, if they did not feel themselves to be the proper cause of them by the free determinations of their own will. The soul or conscience of man charges him with acting amiss, when his will has chosen that which is evil, and brought misery upon himself; and hence arise sharp and bitter inward reflexions, and sorrows of another kind than those which proceed from mere calamities which were necessary, and which he could not avoid. Nor can we suppose the God of nature would have placed such a principle in mankind, as should naturally excite him to bitter anguish and self accusation for actions which were naturally necessary, that is, if he were determined to them necessarily by his perceptions, and in which his will had no self-determining power or choice.

Advantage V. This doctrine of the self determining power of the will, shews us a wise and good man in his true character, viz. whose will, though it be a self-determining power, and can chuse contrary to the understanding, and can obey the influences of appetite and sinful passion, yet it suffers itself to be directed and always determines it's choice by the fitness or unfitness of things, as they are represented by the understanding after a due examination and survey, wherefoever this fitness or unfitness appears. And in this conduct he imitates the blessed God, who never acts contrary to these appearances of fitness or unfitness, never determines any thing contrary to the eternal reasons and relations of things as contained in his own ideas, but always chuses and acts in conformity to them.

Advantage VI. This gives us the clearest, the easiest, and the most unexceptionable account how sin came first into the world. Man in paradise was wise and innocent, but imperfect and in a state of trial. Sense, or appetite, or passion, or all these together, joined with the devil in the serpent to make a false representation of things to his understanding, without giving him sufficient evidence to have determined his judgment on their side, and influenced his choice: Then his will, which ought to have suspended his judgment till he had made further search and enquiry, did in some heedless and unwatchful moment, rashly suffer the soul to assent to falshood, and as rashly and hastily followed these false representations, and determined it's choice to evil instead of good.

Or we may suppose, that the will being tempted and inticed strongly by appetite and passion, both by an inordinate sensual appetite to the forbidden fruit, and inordinate desire of knowledge and ambition of being as a god, determined itself rashly, without delay and enquiry, to obey and comply with the strong bias of present appetite and passion, without waiting for a mature judgment of the understanding; and thus man chose what was evil, and disobeyed his maker: And herein man appeared highly criminal in his first sin, and the fault must be laid entirely upon himself, because it was a free act of his will, which was a self-determining power. And indeed there is no such thing as actual sin, properly speaking, but in free acts of the will.

Whereas if we suppose the understanding to be necessarily determined to judge according to the appearances of things, and the will necessarily to follow the judgment of the understanding; then the blame will be ready to be cast on the providence of

God

God which placed *Adam* in such circumstances, as that such false representations should be made to his understanding which he could not avoid, and which would necessarily first determine his judgment, and consequently his choice of evil, and his disobedience to his maker.

I will not assume so much as to pretend this is the only way whereby we can account for sin's coming into the world, and making it's first entrance into the innocent heart of the first man; but I think this gives as fair and easy a solution of it, as any that I have found.

Advantage VII. This doctrine shews us the excellency and rewardableness of faith in the gospel of *Christ*, and the criminal nature of unbelief. When the christian revelation is proposed to man as coming from God, it becomes man as a rational creature to consider the proofs and evidences brought to confirm it, the prophecies, the miracles, the internal excellencies, and all external testimonies that come with it: And it is the will which must employ and determine the mind to dwell upon these enquiries diligently and faithfully, in proportion to the merits of the cause, to keep the heart sincere and unbiassed in the enquiry, to attend carefully to every gleam of light, and every argument, and to suffer itself to be convinced, at last, by the preponderating weight of reasoning, laying aside every prejudice of flesh and mind, of appetite and passion, of pride and self-sufficiency, of antiquity and novelty, of education and company, &c. and not to pass a judgment without such evidence as appears to be just and sufficient. This is a work of self-denial and sincerity, diligence and labour, to keep the mind in a wise suspense till arguments appear convincing, and then to yield up all it's former mistakes and prejudices to this conviction. This is truly rewardable in the sight of God. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." *John xx. 29.*

On the other hand, it is the will of man that hath the chief hand in infidelity: It is the will that indulges prejudices against the gospel, it refuses to apply and hold the mind close to a diligent and faithful survey of it with all it's evidences; or it wisheth the gospel may not be true, because it restrains it's appetites or evil inclinations; or it determines against it rashly upon slight and insufficient grounds; it indulges an aversion to it without reason, and thereby becomes culpable, and is justly punishable. "He that believeth not shall be damned." *Mark xvi. 16.*

Whereas the contrary opinion, which makes faith or unbelief, assent or dissent to the gospel, and acceptance or rejection of it, to be the necessary effect of present appearances of things to the understanding, and supposes things necessarily to appear according to the circumstances and situation in which they are placed, without interesting the free will and choice of man at all in the matter of faith or unbelief; this opinion, I say, goes a great way toward the excusing of infidelity as innocent, and taking away the virtuous character and rewardableness of faith in the gospel.

Advantage VIII. This doctrine of the self determining power of the will allows the blessed God a full freedom of choice in distributing his favours to which of his creatures he pleases, and in what degrees. It lays a just foundation of praise and thankfulness for all the free actions of his goodness and kindness to his creatures, according to those degrees of mercy and bounty which he distributes among them; because he is not obliged to all those particular actions or objects by a necessary and superior fitness, since he might have chosen to neglect those objects, or to manifest equal or superior goodness to other creatures, or to do it in much less degrees, or in other ways and manners, any of which might have been equally fit and proper: as for instance, God might have brought forth the soul of an *american* savage in the *british*

islands, surrounded with light and knowledge; or have produced me among the savages in *America* in gross darkness, as well as in *Great Britain*, a land of light. My soul might have been united to a body born of *african* idolaters; he might have made me blind and a cripple, as well as given me health and eye-sight; I might have had the brain of an idiot, and been bred up without knowledge, as well as enjoyed my share of intellectual powers and advantages of learning; he might have formed me the child of a beggar, made me a heir to filth and wretchedness, and trained me up to ask my bread from door to door, instead of the comfortable circumstances which I enjoy, and the parents from whence I came. We cannot but suppose it possible for the great God to have found a way to have made these things comport with his grand scheme and counsels in the universe, if he had so pleased; but he has chosen and determined better things for me from his own free will and sovereign goodness, and blessed be his name.

Advantage IX. This doctrine manifests and maintains the just distinction between the moral and positive commands of God, while we suppose his moral commands and prohibitions to be drawn from the eternal fitness or unfitness of things; whereas his positive commands and prohibitions are for the most part, if not entirely, the free and arbitrary determinations of his will and choice.

I do not call them arbitrary, as though God had no reason at all for appointing them, or that they are not suited to attain very happy and divine purposes in the grand scheme of his counsels; but they are arbitrary in this respect, that he might have chosen and appointed other positive commands or prohibitions, which might have been equally fit, and have attained purposes as happy and glorious, and which he might have introduced with equal reason: For it is very hard to suppose, as I hinted above, that every punctilio and all the little circumstances of every positive command and prohibition of God throughout all the ages of his church, patriarchal, *jewish* and christian, were determined by the necessary superior fitness of them. I shall enquire immediately, whether any thing more than this can be said concerning his moral commands; and then what difference is there between the one and the other?

Advantage X. This scheme of the self-determining power of the will represents the doctrine of the freedom of man's will, and the power and prevalence of divine grace in a most happy harmony and consistency, perhaps beyond what any other scheme can represent. Suppose God decree and determine to convert such a sinner as *Onesimus* to faith and holiness: he can represent to his understanding, by his own word, and by the additional operation of his own Spirit, the fitness and goodness of faith in *Christ*, and true repentance, in such a superior light, as he who knows the hearts and sentiments, the circumstances and situations of all men, doth certainly foreknow will be not only sufficient but effectual to influence and persuade the will of *Onesimus* to comply with it: And yet perhaps God need not mechanically or physically, necessarily or irresistibly move and constrain the will of the creature to comply. And though the will is left to its own free agency and self-determining power, yet the light in which God sets the gospel before the eyes of the mind is so great, as will finally and certainly persuade the will, though not necessarily impel or constrain it. And the great God, who knows intimately the make and constitution of our natures, and our present situation, sees clearly that this light will be finally effectual to influence the will freely to comply with the proposals of grace.

Thus the virtuous and pious actions of men are praise-worthy and rewardable, and approve themselves to their own consciences as well as to God, the righteous governor and judge; because the will had a natural self-determining power to chuse the contrary.

contrary. And yet these good actions may be effectually secured as to their performance, by such a powerful representation of divine things to the understanding, as God foreknows will certainly, though not necessarily, be an occasion of the final free determination of the will to piety and virtue; and thus also the free favour or grace of God stands entitled to it's due and divine honours.

It is the opinion of a considerable writer on this subject, that herein lies a great deal of the pleasure of a self-approving conscience, that the good man had a power to chuse an evil object or action, but he actually refused it, and chose the good. And herein God, as as a judge and rewarder, shews his equity, in giving happiness to the man of virtue. Whereas if the divine power physically and irresistibly move and determine the will to chuse what is good, this would make the divine illumination of the mind needless, since the will might then be moved to chuse virtue without it: This, say some, would do violence to nature, would quite invert the method of treating free agents; and many other evil consequences are reckoned up by some authors. Now I would only enquire whether all these are not avoided by supposing the influence of the grace of God upon the soul of man to be only illuminative and persuasive, and yet finally efficacious and certain; which efficacy and certainty seem to be taught us by the express and evident language of several scriptures. Whether these scriptures do certainly imply an immediate and physical influence of divine power on the will, to give it a new general bias and inclination over and above this efficacious illumination of the mind, I leave to be determined by divines, always supposing it to be as effectual on the will, as if it were immediate, and the final event to be as certain.

If any person suggest here, that all the powers of the soul, viz. the will and affections, are grievously corrupted and perverted by the fall of man, and therefore there is need of an almighty physical or supernatural influence on them as well as on the understanding, in order to give them a new bias, and change them to holiness; I would also suggest in my turn, and enquire, whether such a transcendent and supernatural illumination of the understanding may not be the proper and usual divine method of renewing the will and affections, and sufficient to produce such a glorious change in them as the scripture describes and makes necessary to the salvation of sinners? Though the will of man be still a free agent here, yet the grace of God has all the glory in this work of conversion, inasmuch as the first work on the mind is entirely owing to grace, and without it the corrupt will would feel no such change. But I enter no further into this subject here.

S E C T I O N VI.

Objections answered.

THE chief objections which are raised against this scheme, are these that follow.

Objection I. It is granted in this scheme, that wheresoever there is a superior fitness of things, the will of a wise being is generally, if not universally determined or guided in it's choice by this superior fitness: But where no such superior fitness appears to the understanding, there indeed the understanding cannot represent one thing as fitter than another, nor determine the choice of the will; but then it may said, a thousand other things may determine it, without allowing the will such a self-determining

determining power. As in the instance given, suppose two cakes to be proposed to a hungry man, though they are both equal and alike, yet his will may be determined by some situation of one cake in point of light, and reflexion of lights or colours, or by it's nearness to the right hand of the man, or some minute imperceptible motions or impressions made on the body of the man, either on his eyes, on his smell, on his brain or imagination, or some accidental turn of the nerves, of his arm or hand, or something in the air or circumjacent bodies, or some attending circumstances; any of these may determine his will, or determine his hand to take one of these cakes rather than the other, without making the will such a self-determining power as this scheme supposes.

Answer I. If the will do not determine itself, then it must be determined to chuse one of these cakes by suasion, or by mechanism: If by suasion, then it must be by some motive derived from a superior fitness for one of them to be chosen: But this is contrary to the original supposition that they are both equal, and that the senses or the understanding find no difference. If it be by mechanism that the man is led to chuse one of the cakes, then it is a mere action of the animal or brutal part, and not the choice of the man; and thus the will does nothing, or has no share in it, or at most only chuses afterward what the hand hath first chosen, which is contrary to obvious experience.

If a parallel case were proposed in the world of spirits, in which there is no mechanism, such a spirit would remain for ever undetermined any way, though it were a matter of importance to the welfare of that spirit to be determined some one way; and the will of that spirit could not possibly chuse what was so very necessary to it's welfare, and so very easy to obtain, merely for want of superior fitness in one of the things proposed: But it is a very absurd conception, that the blessed God should so form the nature of a spirit, and make it so impotent to chuse what is necessary to it's welfare, and should keep it in everlasting suspense in matters of moment and importance. I might answer in the second place,

Answer II. If all determinations of the will are effected by superior fitness, or by mere mechanism of the body, in either of these cases there is no freedom of choice, no real liberty of indifference in any human action: It is all pure natural necessity that determines the will; and in all these common instances in human life, natural liberty or freedom of choice is entirely lost, and the scheme of fatality is introduced; and how absurd that is, will appear in the following section.

Objection II. The doctrine which has been proposed, depends in a great measure upon this supposition, that the will can determine itself without any prior reason borrowed from things, to chuse one thing out of two or more, which are perfectly equal; but this seems to be impossible: for it is a plain axiom of truth, that "nothing is or comes to pass without a sufficient reason why it is, or why it is in this manner rather than in another." Now, if two things are perfectly equal in all circumstances, there is no sufficient reason why one should be, or why he will of God or man should chuse it; and consequently the will would never chuse nor be determined one way rather than another. If a true balance has equal weights, the scales will for ever hang equal, and neither one nor the other rise or sink, because there is no sufficient reason why one should weigh down the other. Thus it is and would be evidently with the will of man, in case two such equal objects were proposed, whereof one had no more fitness or goodness than the other: And it would be the same thing with the will of God; for if there were not one best or fittest scheme or system of worlds, he would have never chosen or determined to make any world at all; for

as without a sufficient reason nothing can be, so the infinitely wise being never determines himself to act without a sufficient reason.

Answer. Scales and balances, and all other things besides a spirit or being endowed with a will, are, properly and philosophically speaking, passive beings; and therefore they must have some other reason or cause from without, sufficient to determine them one way rather than another, before they can be determined: But spirits are beings of an active nature, the spring of action is a real something within themselves, and by which they can determine themselves. The will of God is an active and self-determining power; and the will of man perhaps in this respect is the chief image of God in this lower world, as it is an active power that can determine itself. Why must all beings and all their powers be supposed to be passive, and be determined by something extrinsic?

It is granted indeed, that the will sometimes borrows a reason for it's determination from various occasions or arguments: Sometimes from very strong motives, and the transcendently superior fitnesses of things; sometimes from weaker motives, where the fitness of things does but just appear superior; and sometimes itself determines it's own choice between things in themselves indifferent, and where there is no superior fitness at all, or at least none that appears.

Yet let it be again observed here, as I have intimated before, that when two equal things are proposed to the will, there may be a very sufficient reason why it should determine it's choice in general some way or other, though there be no sufficient reason in the things themselves for determining in this way rather than that. There is very sufficient reason why a hungry man should eat, when two equal pieces of bread lie before him; but he may chuse which piece he will eat, without any other reason than because he will. So there may be very sufficient reason why God should create a world; but if you ask why he should create this sort of world rather than another, and this sort of creatures rather than others, which may be equally fit, he borrows the reason for it only from himself; his own good pleasure is a sufficient reason: He doth it because he will; nor is any other reason necessary besides his own self-determining power. It is supremely fit he should do what he pleases. Why must the will of God be such a passive power as is not able to act of and from itself?

Objection III. This doctrine of liberty represents the will of an intelligent being as a sort of blind power determining itself without reason in many instances, acting without any motive, chusing and preferring one thing to another without any ground of choice or preference; whereas in all intelligent beings, whether God or man, there are no such blind principles of choice or action.

Answer I. It is granted indeed, that this doctrine does not ascribe understanding, or sight and perception to the will, for that would be to confound those two distinct powers or principles in a spirit: But this doctrine keeps those two powers of understanding and will in their proper characters; the understanding sees or perceives truth and falsehood, fitness and unfitness, good and evil, as far as any such characters or qualities appear, and the will freely determines and chuses after this perception, as it pleases. Generally indeed, and according to nature, the will receives direction for it's own choice or determination from the perceptions of the understanding, where superior fitness or goodness appears: In an unwise being it does not certainly and constantly so chuse or determine; In a wise and good being it always chuses according to this appearing fitness. But where this superior fitness or goodness

ness either is not, or does not appear, what can possibly remain, but that the will of the wisest being must forbear to chuse, act and determine at all, or else it must determine, chuse and act of itself and from itself?

Answer II. Let it be remembered here, what has been hinted in some of the former sections, that though the understanding and will are not improperly represented as two distinct powers of a spirit, yet they are not two distinct beings or substances. It is one and the same spirit, the same intelligent and rational being that both understands and wills, that perceives the fitness or goodness of things, and that generally acts or chuses according to this preception: And therefore this one spirit, this rational being which has the determining power as well as the perceptive power, and which properly determines and chuses as well as perceives, is no such blind agent as the objection represents.

And yet it must be acknowledged, that where the fitness or unfitness, the good or evil of things does not appear to this rational being, or this spirit, where it can discover no superior fitness or goodness, there it must act by it's own choice, and determine itself as it pleases, when it has no other guide or rule for self-determination: And the matter of fact in many instances is so plain as not to be denied. When two cakes lie before a hungry man, in which no manner of difference appears either in the colour, situation, quantity or inviting qualities of them, it is indeed his hunger is the motive which really determines him to eat one of them; and it is a rational, and not a blind irrational action to take one of these cakes and eat it. The man is guided by reason, so far as reason can possibly guide him. But when reason utterly ceases to guide or direct the man, because of the equality of the two cakes, there it must be merely the self-moving power or the will of this rational being which determines which of the two cakes he shall eat, because there is no superior motive or reason to chuse one rather than the other. One might say the same concerning two new guineas, or new halfpence offered to our choice.

In such a case, I plainly feel myself to determine my own choice in and of myself, and I am conscious of no superior motive, I know of nothing without me that makes me prefer one to the other: Now is it possible that I can be determined by a superior motive or moral cause, of which I have no manner of knowledge, no consciousness, no idea? Is this a motive? Is this suasion or moral causality?

In this place I cannot forbear to cite what I lately read, upon my review of these essays, in the notes on archbishop *King's* treatise on the origin of evil. "To argue still that some minute imperceptible causes, some particular circumstances in our own bodies, or those about us, must determine even these seemingly indifferent actions, is either running into the absurdity of making us act upon motives which we do not apprehend; or saying that we act mechanically, that is, do not act at all: And in the last place, to say, that we are determined to chuse any of these trifles just as we happen to fix our thoughts upon it in particular at the very instant of action, is either attributing all to the self-moving power of the mind, which is granting the question; or else referring us to the minute and imperceptible causes abovementioned; or else obtruding upon us that idle unmeaning word "chance" instead of a physical cause, which is saying nothing at all. How hard must men be pressed under an hypothesis, when they fly to such evasive shifts as these! How much easier and better would it be to give up all such unknown and unaccountable impulses, and own that both common sense and experience dictate an independent, free, self-moving principle, the true, the obvious, the only source of action?" page 165. edition 1st.

Objection

Objection IV. But whatsoever may be said of the blind and arbitrary determinations of the will of man, without reason and without motive, surely it is not so with the great and blessed God; all his actions are wise, and fit, and good: His will always chuses and determines according to the fitness or unfitness of things: He never does any thing in an arbitrary manner, or by mere will and pleasure; and though we are at a loss to find out the superior fitness or unfitness of many things by which the divine will is determined to chuse or refuse, yet he who hath all the infinite ideas of things real and possible within the grasp of his understanding, can see those superior fitnesses or unfitnesses which are unsearchable to us, and he always determines and acts according to them: for infinite wisdom cannot act otherwise.

Answer. To guard against the charge of supposing the great God to act in an arbitrary manner, without good reason, and without fit motives, let it be again considered, what has been often hinted before, that God never decrees or acts in general without a just design and reason for it, and a proper end to be obtained by it: as for instance; if God determine to create rather than not to create, there was probably a reason for it taken from the consequences of creation which the blessed God designed, and had in his view: But when several distinct and different creatures or worlds appear in idea to his infinite understanding, in any of which there is no superior fitness, but which in themselves are equally fit, and by each of which, considered as means, he may equally obtain the same end, then he must chuse one of these means, that is, one of these worlds in particular, only by the determination of his own will: And if this be called sovereign and arbitrary conduct, it is still no more than the eternal nature of things requires, and it shews him to be a proper sovereign over all his creatures, and to have a complete freedom of indifference or absolute choice in these his determinations.

Objection V. Perhaps it will be objected here, that if two things are perfectly equal, and if the will of God or man determines itself to chuse one of them without a sufficient reason taken from the things, to determine it, then it is determined by mere chance or accident: Now it is very hard to suppose concerning any wise being, and especially concerning the all-wise God, that in any instance of action he is determined by chance.

Answer. Chance is a word invented to signify the production of an effect in the corporeal world, whose cause we see not, and for which we cannot account; then we say, it came by chance, as though there was no cause of it. Chances or accidents are such events as we see not the train of causes which produce them. But in the acts of the will there is nothing can be ascribed to chance, for the will itself is the obvious cause of it's own determinations.

The word chance always means something done without design. Chance and design stand in direct opposition to each other; and consequently chance can never be properly applied to acts of the will, which is the spring of all design, and which designs to chuse whatsoever it doth chuse, whether there be any superior fitness in the thing it chuses or no; and it designs to determine itself to one thing where two things perfectly equal are proposed, merely because it will.

Nor can I think of any way to refute this doctrine which I have here proposed, unless we could prove that amongst all the infinite mediums which may appear to the human or the divine mind towards the attainment of any proposed end, there are no two mediums that are equal, or which cannot be equally accommodated to their own purposes: And I think this is more than any man can prove. But this introduces the last objection.

Objection VI. If we may judge of things by the nicest observations that we can possibly make among all the beings we know or converse with, there is no such thing in nature, nor ever was, as two things proposed to the will of God or man which are perfectly equal or indifferent, or wherein every circumstance was so entirely alike, that there is no reason for the will to incline to one side rather than the other. There is no such thing as two leaves of a tree exactly alike; you may travel and search till your feet and your eyes ake, and never find them. Even in two grains of sand, or two drops of milk or water, microscopes will always shew you some difference; and therefore this doctrine of two or more things perfectly equal is founded upon a mere imaginary supposition, and the hypothesis that is built upon it cannot stand.

Answer. What if there are no two leaves of trees, no two grains of sand, or drops of water or milk perfectly alike, because they are all compounded bodies? Yet in two bodies perfectly simple, such as two pieces of solid matter without a pore, there may be perfect equality and likeness. And surely if not in fact, yet in the divine idea of possibles there may be many parts of matter perfectly like and equal. If we are allowed to talk of two distinct parts of time, or distinct parts of space in which the world might have been created, it must be confessed that these parts of space or time are perfectly alike, and consequently that the determination of the will of God to create the world in one of these parts of time or space rather than another, was entirely from his own will.

If one would descend to the minute specific particles of which distinct bodies are composed, we should see abundant reason to believe there are thousands of such little particles or atoms of matter, which are perfectly equal and alike, and could give no distinct determination to the will of God where to place them. Is it not acknowledged by philosophers that the different kinds of bodies are made up of corpuscles, of different shapes and different sizes; but that each particular kind is made of similar corpuscles, and nearly equal also? Thus for instance, the particles of common water have some essential difference from the particles of oil, blood, quicksilver, animal or vegetable juices, and other liquids; but they are, in a great measure, if not universally, similar among themselves: Now if we consider the immense quantity of pure water which is in this world, and the innumerable small essential particles that compose it, is there not abundant reason to suppose that millions of these particles are equal and alike, rather than to imagine that God the Creator took special care that among the innumerable millions of these aqueous particles which he made in all the rivers and oceans in the world, there should not be two of them alike and equal; and yet that all of them should be so nearly equal, and so much alike, as to distinguish them from the particles of all other bodies?

We might use the same sort of reasoning concerning the particles that compose air, light, sun-beams, concerning earth, sand, stone and chalk, concerning grass, herbs, leaves and trees; the hair, skin, flesh and bones of animals, and all other specific particles of bodies whether solid or fluid, that compose this lower world: We might ascend to the sun, the vastest of all bodies, and consider the infinite myriads of luminous or fiery particles which go to compose it, or which have been issuing from it every moment since it's creation, and all these perhaps are vastly more in number than go to compose all the planets put together, and then enquire whether there are not two of all these particles exactly alike: This argument would run through the whole universe of the planetary worlds, with all their contents and inhabitants; and can we suppose that the Creator took such exact care as never to make two particles of any body perfectly equal and similar, and at the same time that he

took

took care to make each of them so nearly equal and simular, as to keep all the particles of one species of bodies in shape and size sufficiently distinct from the particles that compose every other species? He that can suppose this, plainly appears to serve an hypothesis.

It is evident enough that the objector's supposition, that there are no two things equal and alike, is only brought in to oppose this doctrine which I have laid down, and that without any proof, or indeed probability: And the supposition that there are or may be a multitude of things which are entirely alike and equal, is certainly a possible thing, and vastly the more probable of the two. If we had no proof of it, yet the various difficulties or seeming absurdities that press hard upon the contrary supposition, viz. "that no two things are equal, and that the will of God or man is always determined by some superior fitness of things," would incline one to renounce that hypothesis. These will be represented at large in the next section.

Since the first edition of this book an ingenious friend has proposed this objection, viz. If God exerts his creating power, he hath some reason for it taken from the preferableness of the existence of what he creates to it's non-existence; otherwise he would never create at all. To this I answer,

Answer. This is more than can be proved, for the non-existence of that creature may be as fit in itself as the existence of it; and God might have created another being equally fit in the room of it, by the mere determination of his own will.

My friend goes on, If of two possible objects equally fit to be chosen, he gives existence to one, leaving the other in it's non-existent state, the reason of his creating but one is the absence of any good reason for creating of both.

Answer. It is possible there might be equal reason for the creation of one or of both, that is, no reason at all in superior fitness: but the existence of one rather than both may be entirely owing to the will of God.

Or suppose God was determined by superior fitness to create one out of two possibles rather than both, yet the existence or the non existence of either of them alone, may have equal fitness, though the existence of both should be supposed unfit. But how ready are we to lose and confound our thoughts in this abstract reasoning upon divine ideas and decrees, which are indeed too high and too hard for us; and it becomes us not to be too positive and presumptuous upon either side of such sublime and abstruse reasonings.

S E C T I O N VII.

The difficulties that attend the contrary scheme.

WHEN we enter into a narrow disquisition of the eternal counsels of God, and the determinations of his will, perhaps we shall find some difficulties pressing us on all sides, which cannot be clearly and completely relieved by the understanding and reasoning powers of man, at least in this present state. I do not pretend that my set of sentiments is entirely free from all: But the chief difficulty is to find any scheme which has less or fewer than this which I have represented. Till I see that done, I think I must be content to abide where I am. It is possible I may meet with some new objections against mine, which I had not thought of before; but while every scheme has some hardships, I persuade myself that hypothesis may still be allowed to come nearest to the truth, which has the least and fewest difficulties attending it. But when the difficulties are many more and greater which hang upon any one human scheme than do upon another, we are naturally led to suppose

that such a scheme can never be true, or at least that it is by no means so probable as the opposite.

Let us then consider what will be the consequences of supposing that the divine will in all it's determinations and decrees whatsoever, is universally, certainly and unalterably influenced by the superior fitness of things.

Difficulty I. Then there is nothing amongst all the works of God's creation, or his providence, or his government of creatures through time or eternity, left free to him with a liberty of choice or indifference, since this opinion supposes there is but one single train of fittest things, or one set of things supremely fit among all the millions of supposed possibles that come within the divine survey. Has it not been always said, and that with great truth and justice, that all creatures are contingent beings, and that they might not have been. But according to this supposition, no creature existing is a contingent being, for it's superior fitness made it's existence necessary.

And upon this hypothesis every atom in the creation, together with the shape of it, and the size and situation of it through the whole universe, every motion in the world of corporeal nature appointed by God, together with the times and periods, minutes and moments of every event, the least as well as the greatest, except those which are introduced by inferior spirits, are all eternally necessary, because they are the fittest that could be.

And I might add, they are as unchangeably necessary as the being of God himself, that is, with a consequential, if not with a simultaneous necessity; for at least from the very position of his essence and existence, all conceivable things, with all their infinite relations and their eternal fitnesses arise, and they all appear to his view: And the only one scheme of things which is most fit, is necessarily determined by him into existence and actual futurity, with all the minutest parts and appendices thereof, because he sees the superior fitness of them all: Thus the least appearance and event in the corporeal world throughout all the ages of creation and providence, is unalterably necessary, if not equally necessary with God's own being.

Let us see now how such a proposition would sound, and with what aspect such a scheme of things would appear to our minds, if we enter into the detail of them. Then God could not have abstained from making this our world at all, nor from making it just such as it is, nor withheld his hand from creation one moment longer: then he could not have made one more planet or star, or one less than he has done: nay, not so much as one atom or dust more or less in any star or planet, nor have placed them in any other form. He could not have given the sun one more beam, nor any morning since the creation one more gleam of light, or one less shade of darkness. Then the ever-blessed God could not have been happy one moment longer in solitude, or without creatures, nor begun to form any part of this universe, or this globe earlier or later than he did; nor could he have caused one spire of grass to grow on this earth, nor one drop of water in the sea, nor one sand more or less at the bottom of it. He could not continue the material world, nor any atom of it a moment longer in existence, nor have fixed the periods even of the minutest beings any otherwise than he has done. Not a drop of rain could fall, not a particle of water flow, nor a dusky atom of smoke ascend in any other manner, nor at any other minute than it doth; nor could the great God have decreed it otherwise in the least punctilio, so far as mere corporeal nature is concerned therein, because each of these was supremely fit, together with the original train of causes which necessarily produced them.

But

But if it be allowed, that in any of these minute and inconsiderable things, God may determine freely and merely by his own will without superior fitness, why may he not determine ten thousand other things, which seem to us of greater importance, merely by his own will without superior fitness?

But on the contrary, if God cannot do any thing without the view of superior fitness, this difficulty will extend to the affairs of human nature also, and to the works of providence, redemption and grace, as well as to the inanimate world and God's creating influences. The *Americans* and the *Hottentots* could not have been formed otherwise than under such special disadvantages; nor could *Great-Britain* have had the gospel withheld from it one moment longer. Nor indeed, according to this scheme, could God have withheld his Son from being sent to redeem the world, nor withheld his Spirit with all its gifts and influences from the inhabitants of this globe, nor have omitted any one miracle towards the propagation of this gospel; for the will of God was absolutely determined to do all this by its superior fitness.

What strange doctrine is this, contrary to all our ideas of the dominion of God? Does it not destroy the glory of his liberty of choice, and take away from the Creator and governor and benefactor of the world, that most free and sovereign agent, all the glory of this sort of freedom? Does it not seem to make him a kind of intelligent instrument of eternal necessity, an almost mechanical medium of fate, and introduce Mr. *Hobbes's* doctrine of fatality and necessity into all things that God hath to do with? Doth it not seem to represent God as a being of vast understanding and consciousness, as well as of power and efficiency, but still to leave him without a will to chuse among all the objects within his view? In short, it seems to make the blessed God a sort of almighty minister of fate under its universal and supreme influence. Thus speaks the heathen stoic in a tragedy:

“ Quæ nexa suis currunt causis
Non licet ipsum vertisse *Jovem.*” *Seneca.*

“ Thus causes run, a long connected train;
Not *Jove* himself can break th' eternal chain.”

And it was the professed sentiment of some of the ancients, that “ fate was above the gods.”

Is it not abundantly better to suppose that among the infinite variety of possibles in the survey of the great God, there might be many schemes of grand design, and many mediums of accomplishment, both in the larger and minuter parts of them, which might be equally fit and proper? And that God by his own will determined which scheme he would chuse, and which medium he would make use of to bring it to pass? And that he made or rendered this particular scheme and these mediums become, if I may so express it, more fit and good, that is, pleasing and agreeable by his own chusing them? So a man, when he has once chosen for himself one thing out of many which he proposed to himself, and all which before appeared to him to be equally good, makes that which he has chosen particularly more agreeable and good to himself by his choice of it, and for ever after prefers it because his own will has actually chosen it: He delights in his own free choice.

Objection. Perhaps it may be replied here, that even according to the scheme that I have proposed, all those things are allowed to be eternally and unchangeably necessary in which God beholds a superior fitness; and these perhaps are far more

in number than those which have no such superior fitness, or which in themselves are equal and indifferent: And then it will follow that even in this scheme of mine, fatality is introduced into far the greatest parts of the works of God. * For if there be the least degree of inequality in any two or more objects, the divine wisdom beholds it, and finds out the superior fitness, and is determined thereby: And then probably there are but few things left which have such a perfect equality in them, as to be the objects of free choice: All the rest is mere fate.

Answer. But to this I answer, That if we suppose no more than two different sorts of worlds to have had equal fitness in the divine view, before he chose to create one of them, together with the creatures and the inhabitants in them, then it follows that every creature and every circumstance of every creature in this one universe or world, which God has actually chosen and created, were all matters of indifference, and consequently were the object of his free choice: For though every creature in this universe, or the world which is now made, should be allowed to have a superior fitness with regard to the place it holds in this present universe, which is very improbable, and more than can be proved, yet I think we must own that every individual part or creature of this world, together with this world itself, once stood in the view of God as a matter of mere indifference, and an object of free choice, since another sort of world might have been created, with all its different parts, creatures or inhabitants.

We might proceed further, and say the same concerning every single planet, and the creatures or inhabitants in it, and perhaps concerning every large spot of land, every mountain, every island, every sea and river in any of these planets, that they might have been altered as to some atoms or drops that compose them, though the other parts of that planetary world had been the same: And this reasonable supposition provides objects enough for the divine choice, and the freedom of the will of God to exert itself.

We might also descend to much minuter parts of the creation, to every tree, and leaf, and flower, to every plant and animal, to every feather and hair of fowl and beast, as well as to the inanimate parts of any of these globes: There does not seem to be an absolute necessity that every minute part, and pore and fibre of every species and of every individual should be precisely what they now are, even though the chief part of the form of each of them were the same as it is: And this will still provide new objects for the choice of God, and his perfect liberty. Thus his actions of free choice in our world will be vastly more numerous than those to which he is any way determined by a superior fitness.

Nay, every act of God and his determination of any or every circumstance relating to every creature in the present universe, will be an act of his free choice or liberty of indifference, if we allow, as I said before, but two general schemes of a
creable

* Another objection is raised here: If there be any one thing to which God is influenced by superior fitness, this is fatality: and if such a fatality be allowed in one thing why may it not in all? Or if one or a few such instances in God's works do not infer fatality, why should many or all infer it?

Answer I. As we do not charge the doctrine of fatality on men upon a supposition of some of the volitions or actions of men to be determined necessarily, since the rest and greatest part are free, so neither can fatality be charged on God, since the chief and largest part of his actions "ad extra" are free also, as will appear further in what follows.

Answer II. Whatsoever ideas or propositions, whatsoever eternal truths, or rules of virtue may be necessary in the divine mind, yet there is not so much as the real existence of one creature necessary, and so fatality is utterly excluded; since all created beings are contingent till the will of God determine them into existence. See difficulty I. preceding. See also the answer to the objection in this very page.

erable universe to have been equally fit; even though every particular part of each universe were supposed to be necessary to it's own whole, and therefore supremely fit in that particular universe, if language will allow such an expression. This doctrine therefore is so far from fatality in every part of it, that it makes every creature or existent being in the present natural world the object of God's free choice.

Difficulty II. According to this supposed scheme, that is, if one single thing be the only fittest, and if God be determined necessarily to this one thing, then the free grace and goodness of God, and the special thankfulness of man for his benefits, seem to be much diminished, and in some measure precluded: For in this view of things, God could not bestow one grain of favour more or less upon any creature than he hath done; nor could he have chosen any other object for the exercise of his mercy and goodness, either among the varieties of the animal or intellectual creatures than what he has chosen. And would not this take away a great part of my obligation to thankfulness for any of his benefits, and in some measure cancel my obligations to thank him for his choice of me to be the object of them, if I must believe that God could not have withheld these benefits from me, nor could have chosen any other object for those blessings which he has made me partaker of, nor given me a grain less of any good thing which I enjoy relating to this life or another?

It is true, you will say, God has done me as much good as he could do, and therefore I am under the highest obligations to him: But let it be remembered also, if I may dare to express the consequence of this opinion, that he has made me as unhappy as he could make me, according to this scheme, and see whether this does not diminish or vacate a great part of this obligation.

Will not this destroy, or at least vastly abate the reasons of gratitude and love to God in those who receive his favours, when kings and slaves, rich men and beggars, strong men and cripples, creatures whose life is filled with pain and poverty, or whose whole period of life is affluence and ease, were distinguished only and necessarily by the superior fitness of their circumstances? What is there of free mercy in his disposal of benefits? What can we find of mercy in the decree or providence of God, which distinguishes the happy from the miserable? What is it that raises them above the others, but that God was necessarily determined to divide these distinct portions to them all by the superior fitness of things? And have not *Abraham* the friend of God, *David* the king, *Paul* the apostle, *Sir Isaac Newton* the philosopher; *Judas* the traitor; *Irus* the cripple, *Davus* the slave, and *Jack Adams* the idiot, all equal reason of thankfulness to the free bounty of their maker, since so far as he acted in their composition of mind or body, or in their original circumstances of life; he determined each in such a particular manner, because his own will was thus necessarily determined, and therefore he could not have done otherwise.

Difficulty III. If there be but one such superior fitness among all the ends and means which are in the comprehensive survey of God, and if God be under an unalterable necessity of determining according to this superior fitness, thence it will follow that every thing possible is necessary, and every thing that is not necessary is impossible.

There is scarce any real difference between things necessary and things possible, even in the view of God himself, according to this scheme of all things being determined by supreme fitness. The difference is chiefly in our apprehension, by reason of our short-sighted views of things, who cannot discover this superior fitness. But in reality, and in the sight of God, according to this hypothesis, nothing is possible to be done by God himself but what hath this superior fitness, and that is always necessary, and must be done.

And.

And according to this opinion also, what is not necessary is really impossible, and can never come into existence, because it has not this superior fitness. In this way of thinking, there neither is, nor ever was a medium between the necessity of what is future, and the impossibility of that which is not future, since there is but one fittest means or end, and that is necessarily future; but what is not fittest is for ever impossible, and always was so. Now does not this appear strange and incredible doctrine?

I know it will be objected here, that this way of talking confounds metaphysical necessity with moral necessity, which are very distinct things. A metaphysical necessity, say some, is a necessity arising from the essence or nature of things, and takes place only where the opposite implies a contradiction; so all the semidiameters of a circle are necessarily equal, because it is inconsistent in the nature of things they should be unequal. But a moral necessity is that whereby a most wise being is necessarily led to chuse that which is best, or to act that which is fittest. Now in this view there is a wide difference, say they, betwixt things necessary and possible, that is, things that are metaphysically possible and which are morally necessary. A thing is said to be metaphysically possible wherein there is no inconsistency in the nature of things, and such are ten thousand essences which yet shall never exist: And this is very different from a thing which is morally necessary, that is, which an all wise being wills and chuses out of ten thousand supposed possibles, because of it's superior fitness, even though divine wisdom cannot chuse otherwise. But to this I answer,

Answer. That in philosophical strictness and the truth of things, this moral necessity and impossibility, and this metaphysical necessity and impossibility will appear to be very near a-kin: And though there may be some difference between these two necessities, viz. moral and metaphysical, as to the immediate and proxime cause and reason of their necessity, yet the necessity of both of them is a physical or natural necessity, they are both equally strong and unalterable, and the original cause and reason why both of them are necessary, lies in the very nature of things. I might say the same also concerning their impossibility: As for example; if the being A cannot possibly exist because it carries in it some ideas or properties which are naturally inconsistent, so neither can B possibly exist, because it doth not carry in it a superior fitness; since, according to this hypothesis, it is inconsistent with the nature of the all-wise God to make B exist, because it was not supremely fit; and it is inconsistent in the nature of things that B should ever come into existence, because it wanted one property necessary to the possibility of it's existing, and that is supreme fitness: Thus from the very nature of God, and from the nature of things, it is impossible that B should ever exist. And how much does this differ from a natural or physical impossibility?

Hence it appears, according to this hypothesis, that it was true from eternity that every thing was naturally impossible which had not in it's nature this superior fitness; and if it had in it's nature this superior fitness, then it was not only possible, but had a sort of natural necessity to exist, which was the thing I undertook to prove, and which is the difficulty under which this opinion still seems to labour, notwithstanding the offered distinction.

Difficulty IV. Another difficulty that seems to bear hard upon this hypothesis, of "all things being determined by superior fitness," is this, viz. Then there would be scarce any real difference between the moral and the positive laws of God. The one would be every whit as necessary as the other, both in themselves as laws, and with regard to God the law-giver: For if all the positive commands and institutions of God are given because he saw an antecedent fitness and goodness in them superior to any other commands that could be given at that time, and in those circumstances; and

and if all his moral commands are given upon the same reason, will it not follow that the positive laws are as necessary for that time and those circumstances as the moral laws are in all times and circumstances? I say, allowing this difference, that the moral commands are necessary at all times and occasions, and the positive only on some particular occasions. And upon this hypothesis, it is no more in the power of God to have altered the positive commands on those particular occasions, than it is in his power to change the moral commands on any occasion whatsoever. Then every pin and tack in the tabernacle of *Moses*, every little punctilio and circumstance in all the *levitical* rites of purification and sacrifice, every colour and thread which is of divine appointment in the curtains of the tabernacle, or the vestments of the priest, were as necessary at that time and place as the ten commands, or any rule of virtue and piety whatsoever; since they did necessitate and determine the will of God to appoint them by his seeing a superior fitness and goodness in them all.

It is true indeed, we who are short-sighted creatures, and cannot penetrate so far into the fitness or unfitness of things cannot find out the positive commands of God by our reasoning, as we can many of the greater and more obvious moral laws: yet let it be observed also, that these moral laws in some of the lesser branches of them, and in their application to particular cases, perhaps can hardly be found out by our short and feeble reasonings; and in this respect the difference between moral and positive laws would grow less and less, even with regard to us, till in many instances the difference would vanish. But with regard to God himself, and in the nature of things, they would be both equally necessary, and God could not appoint any of them otherwise than he has done.

Difficulty V. Then there would be no such thing as any liberty of choice and indifference in the world, or at least only among imperfect intelligent beings who are endowed with wills, and that but seldom too: And this very liberty would arise merely from their imperfection, that is, because in some things they could not find the superior fitness, since they cannot extend their knowledge deep and wide enough to see all the fitnesses and unfitnesses of things. For according to this scheme, all the decrees and actions of God the most perfect spirit, about himself, or about his creatures, would be ever necessary; and all the material creation, the whole universe of bodies, and every natural motion therein, so far as ordained by God even in their remotest causes, would be necessary from the beginning to the end of all things: And a very wise man who sees the fitnesses of things, would have scarce any thing of this freedom, for he would be always necessarily determined in his choice by this superior fitness.

But let us think a little further on this point: If this opinion were true in the whole scheme, and all spirits, perfect or imperfect, were necessarily determined to act according as things appeared fit or unfit to the mind, and if these appearances were the necessary result of the situation of man or other intelligent creatures, whether wise or unwise, among a variety of objects; then, I think, there would be no freedom of choice, no liberty of indifference at all, no proper self-determining power, either in heaven or earth, either in God, angels or men, but all would be one huge scheme of fatality both in the intellectual and material world.

Shall it be replied here, what? Is there no liberty of indifference to be found any where but where the objects are entirely equal? Have I not liberty of choice, when I chuse one house to dwell in, or prefer one piece of cloth to wear rather than another, because I find one better and fitter for my use than another? Does not all the

world call this a liberty of choice, and proper freedom of the will, notwithstanding the superior qualifications or motives that inclined me to chuse this and refuse that?

I answer, and allow this to be a proper freedom or liberty of choice, supposing the will only to be directed and inclined by these motives, and not powerfully and necessarily determined by them. But if once we assert the will to be necessarily determined by these motives, then it has no proper self-determining power in these instances, and the very idea of proper liberty vanishes and is lost. And indeed what great difference will there be between matter and spirit, if both are determined to move or act only by external influences? Both would be unactive or incapable of self-activity; but one would have a consciousness of it's actions which the other has not.

Is it not much better therefore to suppose, that the influence of motives in the understanding reaches no further than to direct the will, without a certain or necessary determination of it, wheresoever there are motives arising from superior fitness? And may we not reasonably conceive both in this universe, as well as in the world of possibles, that there are millions of objects wherein this superior fitness either is not, or does not appear; and here is still a larger space for the exercise of perfect freedom of choice, and wherein the will is determined by nothing but itself.

Difficulty VI. It may be considered as another difficulty and hardship which would attend this opinion, that there are a great number of scriptures which would have a most absurd sound, if they were to be interpreted upon this foot, viz. the necessary determination of the will of God in every thing by the antecedent and superior fitness of things. There is no act of providence or grace which the scripture represents as a free favour of the blessed God, but would be hereby made necessary, and God would be limited to that one object and that one action. Let us consider a few particulars.

Numb. iv. 37. *Moses* saith to the *Israelites*, "Because he loved thy fathers, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, therefore he chose their seed after them:" But in truth, according to this doctrine, he loved them because they were the fittest for his love, and God could not do otherwise; and he chose them and their seed, because he could make no other choice.

Deuter. xxi. 5. "The priests the sons of *Levi*, the Lord thy God hath chosen to minister unto him;" that is, because he saw such a superior fitness in the sons of *Levi*, that he could not chuse any other tribe.

1 Sam. x. 24. God chose *Saul* to make him a king, but he was determined to it by the superior fitness of this choice.

Psal. cxxxii. 13. "The Lord hath chosen *Sion*, he hath desired it for his habitation;" that is, because he saw it so fit, that he could not chuse any other dwelling in that age.

1 Corinth. i. 27. "God hath chosen the foolish things of this world, and the weak things, and things that are despised." It is true, he gives a reason for it, viz. that he might confound the wise, &c. but then it is plain, he could not have chosen the wise, the mighty and the honourable.

1 Thess. ii. 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation;" that is, because it was so supremely fit, that he could not pass you by without chusing you.

How frequent is the expression in scripture of God's chusing this or that person or thing, this or that family or nation, for particular purposes in his providence and grace? And it is represented still as a matter of free favour: But according to this interpretation,

interpretation, there is no true liberty of choice or free mercy in all these things, since there was such a superior fitness on that side, that it was not possible for God to have determined or chose otherwise.

But let us proceed to some other texts. *Eph. ii. 4.* "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,—hath quickened us together with *Christ*:" But according to this opinion, he could not possibly have loved the *Ephesians* less than he did, nor let them go on in their death of trespasses and sins without quickening grace.

1 *Tim. i. 13.* "I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, saith *St. Paul*, but I obtained mercy—and the grace of God, was exceeding abundant. But this opinion would interpret the words, that God could not withhold mercy from me, and therefore I obtained it: and the grace of God was exceeding abundant to me, because it was not possible it should have been less.

Romans ix. 23, 24. "That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy—not of the *jews* only, but also of the gentiles." But this opinion obscures these riches of glorious grace, by shewing that God could chuse no other vessels of mercy but the *jews* of old time, and the gentiles afterward, and in that proportion in which he chose them.

Romans xi. 20. "*Isaiah* grows very bold and saith, I was found of them that sought me not;" that is, God was necessarily determined by the superior and antecedent fitness of things to be found of those who never sought him.

And if we read the whole ninth chapter to the *Romans*, we find God is there represented as making a distinction of mercy between *Isaac* and *Ismael*, between *Jacob* and *Esau*, between the *jews* and gentiles, first in favour of the *jews*, and afterwards rejecting the *jews*, and receiving the gentiles: Let these texts be construed in what sense you please with regard to persons, or families, or nations, or with regard to temporal, spiritual, or eternal blessings, still all are represented by the apostle as instances of God's sovereign goodness and special mercy, in the free choice of some, and the neglecting of others. But according to this opinion, there is no such thing as liberty of choice or indifference with God in any of these actions; for he could have acted no otherwise than he did in any one punctilio of grace or providence: His will was necessarily determined as to all his benefits of every kind, and to the persons who were objects of them, by antecedent superior fitness, so that he could not have bestowed nor withheld these blessings in any other manner than he has withheld or bestowed them.

I grant always, and have always granted, that wheresoever there is such an antecedent superior fitness of things, God acts according to it, so as never to contradict it; and particularly in all his judicial proceedings as a governor and distributor of rewards and punishments, he has a constant regard to vice and virtue, to superior fitness and unfitness, though he may reward or rather bestow beyond our merit, or he may punish less. And even in acts of mere bounty and free goodness, we must always grant and suppose him never to act what is not fit. Yet we may also suppose, when we consider God as a benefactor, that in his infinite survey of things, there may be a thousand equally fit objects for this goodness, and a thousand equal ways of manifesting it. Now this reasonable supposition leaves him a very large field for the exercise of his sovereign goodness and pleasure, and the free determinations of his will and choice, both as to the blessings which he bestows, and the persons or nations on whom he bestows them.

Let us take one further step, and shew that even the grace of God in sending his own Son to redeem us, is much obscured by this opinion of the constant determina-

tion of the will of God by some superior fitness. *John* iii. 16. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life;" that is, according to this opinion, God so greatly loved the world of mankind because he saw it antecedently most fit for his love, and therefore could not love it less; and he gave his only begotten Son, because he saw it so supremely fit, that he could not withhold him; and he made this covenant of grace and proposal of salvation, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish," because this proposal was so supremely fit also, that it was not possible for him to make any other covenant or any other proposal of salvation.

Verse 17. "God sent not his Son to condemn the world," that is, because he saw it unfit that he should do so, and therefore he could not have sent his Son on this dreadful errand.

Romans v. 8. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were—sinners *Christ* died for us;" but, according to this doctrine he was so necessarily determined to give this particular instance of love to sinners, and to save them in this manner, that he could not have refused to give his Son to die for them. What contrary turns would this sort of philosophy give to this most divine instance of free and rich mercy in all the bible?

Give me leave at the end of this catalogue of scriptures, to cite two or three which represent to us in a more express manner, that the will of God often determines itself with such a supposition of superior fitnesses, that he may display his own godhead, and the independence of his actions. *Rom.* ix. 15. cited from *Exod.* xxxiii. 19. "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee: and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Now, as the name of the Lord is "I am what I am, or I will be what I will be," *Exod.* iii. 14. so his correspondent character in matters of pure grace and bounty is, "I will do what I will do;" that is, the will of God in matters of mere bounty is a self-governing principle, and is determined only by itself in his most free and sovereign instances of grace and blessing; he hath no other determination but what arises from within himself, even the good-pleasure of his own will.

How often is this thought repeated in the word of God? How frequently is this given as the only reason of his conduct, in his works of creation, and in his distributions of blessings in the kingdom of providence and the kingdom of grace? *Matth.* xi. 26. "Even so, Father, because it pleased thee." *Rev.* iv. 11. "Thou hast created all things, O Lord, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." *Isa.* xlv. 9, 10. "I am God, and none else—I will do all my pleasure." *Matth.* xx. 14, 15. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? I will give to this last even as unto thee." *Rom.* ix. 18. "He hath mercy on whom he will."—The blessed God, considered as a Creator and as a benefactor, worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will; in a thousand instances his own will is his counsellor: He acts "according to the good-pleasure of his will which he hath purposed within himself." *Eph.* i. 5, 9, 11.

And here let me conclude with the words of St. Paul, *Rom.* xi. 33, 36. who, when he had been tracing out the methods of the conduct of God towards the *jews* and gentiles, leaves the springs and reasons of them all entirely within himself, and adores the great incomprehensible; "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Of him, and by him, and for him are all things; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

T H E

T H E
CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE
OF THE
T R I N I T Y:

O R,

FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, three PERSONS
and one G O D,

Afferted and proved,

With their divine RIGHTS and HONORS

Vindicated,

By plain evidence of scripture, without the aid or incumbrance of
human S C H E M E S.

Written chiefly for the use of private CHRISTIANS.

THE
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

HIT 10

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

1910

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS
1000 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Copyright 1910

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

1910

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

T H E
P R E F A C E.

THE late controversies about the important doctrine of the trinity, have engaged multitudes of christians in a fresh study of that subject; and amongst the rest I thought it my duty to review my opinions and my faith.

In my younger years, when I endeavoured to form my judgment on that article, the *socinians* were the chief or only popular opponents. Upon a honest search of the scripture, and a comparison of their notions with it, I wondered how it was possible for any person to believe the bible to be the word of God, and yet to believe that *Jesus Christ* was a mere man. So perverse and preposterous did their sense of the scripture appear, that I was amazed how men, who pretended to reason above their neighbours, could wrench and strain their understandings, and subdue their assent to such interpretations. And I am of the same mind still.

But while I was then establishing my sentiments of the deity of the Son and Spirit by the plain expressions of scripture, and the assistance of learned writers, I was led easily into the scholastic forms of explication; this being the current language of several centuries. And thus unawares I mingled those opinions of the schools, with the more plain and scriptural doctrine, and thought them all necessary to my faith, as thousands had done before me.

When I lately resumed this study, I found that the refiners of the *arian* heresy had introduced a much more plausible scheme than that of *Socinus*. While I read some of these writers, I was so much divested of prejudice, and so sincerely willing to find any new light, which might render this sublime doctrine more intelligible, that some persons would have charged me with lukewarmness and indifference. But I think my heart was upright in these enquiries. And as the result of my search, I must say, that I am a steadfast and sincere believer of the godhead of *Christ* still. For though these authors give a rational and successful turn to some places of scripture, which I thought once did contain a substantial argument for that truth, yet there was never any thing that I could find in these new writings, that gave me a satisfying answer to that old, that general and extensive argument for the deity of the Son and Spirit, which I have proposed in it's clearest light in the eighth proposition. The expressions of scripture on that head were so numerous, so evident, so firm and strong, that I could not with any justice and reason enter into the sentiments of this new scheme. But after a due survey of it, I was fully convinced, that the professors of it, who denied the Son and Spirit to have true and eternal godhead belonging to them, were so far departed from the christian faith.

I render

I render hearty thanks to God, who hath so guarded the freedom of my thoughts, as to keep them religiously submissive to plain revelation; and has made these later enquiries a means to establish my faith in this blessed article; That the Father, Son and Spirit, are three * persons and one God, and to confirm it by juster and brighter evidences, than I was possessed of before.

But while I was engaged in this study, I found that the scholastic explication of this sacred doctrine was not in all the parts of it so evidently revealed, and so firmly grounded upon scripture as the plain doctrine itself. Thus while my faith grew bolder in this sacred article, my assurance as to the modes of explication sensibly abated. Though none of the *arian* arguments could prevail against my belief of the true and eternal godhead subsisting in three persons, yet my thoughts were often embarrassed about the co-eternal and co-equal sonship of *Christ*, and procession of the holy Spirit, about the communication of the same infinite individual essence, or the conveyance of the same unoriginated and self-existent nature to two other distinct persons in the godhead. I began to think that we had been too bold in our determinations of the "modus" of this mystery; we had entered too far, and been too positive in describing the eternal and consubstantial generation of the Son, and spiration of the holy Ghost in the same numerical essence; and that we had made a particular detail of these incomprehensibles too necessary a part of our creed.

And especially when I came to reflect, that there had been some other modes of explaining this sacred article proposed to the world, and some of them patronized by men of distinguished learning and unblemished piety, I found that these learned scholastic forms and terms of explication were by no means necessary to support the scriptural doctrine: I took notice also how much occasion the unskilful management of these artificial hypotheses had given to the cavils of heretical wits, to blaspheme the doctrine itself.

I then considered with myself, how useful it might be to private christians to have the plain naked doctrine of scripture concerning the trinity fairly drawn out, and set before their eyes with all its divine vouchers: How much more easily they would embrace this article when they see the whole of it so expressly revealed: And though they might confess they knew not the way to explain it, yet perhaps they might be more firmly established in the truth, and better guarded against temptations to heresy, than if it were surrounded and incorporated with hard words and learned explications, which could not be proved with such express evidence from the word of God, which are confessed to be as unconceivable as the doctrine itself, and which had often ministered to strife and controversy.

I imagined also, that it would be an acceptable service to the church of *Christ*, if this sublime and important doctrine were brought down to a practical use, and our particular duties to the sacred three, were distinctly declared and vindicated out of the holy scriptures; which is of far greater moment to our piety and salvation than any nice adjustment of all the mysterious circumstances that relate to this article in the theory of it.

I knew of no treatise on this subject written in this manner, and therefore I attempted it. Now the reader will find these four things following designed and kept in view throughout this discourse, viz.

First,

* Let it be ever remembered, that both in the title, the preface, and throughout the whole treatise, I take the word "person" to signify no more than a sufficient distinction between the sacred three, to sustain the distinct characters and offices assigned to them in scripture.

I. To declare and confirm this blessed doctrine of the trinity, by plain and express testimonies of scripture. As far as I was capable, I would make this truth appear to the world with as much evidence as it has appeared to me, that the same true godhead belongs to Father, Son and Spirit, and yet that they are three such distinct agents or principles of action, as may reasonably be called persons.

II. To describe, according to the revelation of scripture, what are the same divine honors and duties that may be paid to the sacred three, considered as one in godhead; and what are the distinct personal duties and honors that we are required to pay to each divine person, considered in their distinct characters and offices.

III. To shew that all the necessary truths that relate to this doctrine may be believed, and all the necessary duties that flow from it may be performed, without enquiring into any particular schemes to explain this great mystery of godliness, or to determine the manner, "how one God subsists in three persons." To this end I have taken care to avoid every argument, and every expression that would confine our thoughts to any one scheme of explication, or necessarily lead us into any one hypothesis. For since the doctrine of the trinity is so important in itself, and so necessary to true christianity, I would not willingly bring in any thing as a necessary part of this doctrine, but what might be acknowledged and professed by all who believe that the Son and Spirit are the true God, though they may fall into very various and different sentiments about the way of explaining it.

And in the last place, I have attempted to do all this in such plain and easy language, that every private christian who reads this doctrine may understand it, so far as is necessary, may be established in the scriptural proofs of it, and may have his faith secured in this day of temptation. Upon this account I have been watchful against admitting those *latin* and *greek* words and terms of art, which have too often tended to flatter the vanity of men, and make them learned in mere words and syllables, and which have often proved an incumbrance and burden to their faith, rather than a support of it.

Having these views and designs always in my eye, the judicious reader will not wonder that I have omitted some forms of argument, and some texts of scripture which have been often called into this service. Some of these perhaps would have led me to speak of some particular scheme of explication which was contrary to my great design. Others did not strike me with the same satisfactory evidence, as some of my fathers or brethren have found from them: And though I will not rob them of their arguments, yet I beg leave to produce none but my own. And yet I may be bold to profess, that I believe this sacred doctrine as firmly as those who think they can prove it by a multitude of scriptures which I have omitted: And I hope this may be a sufficient apology, for any such omissions.

It is a most uncharitable and unrighteous thing, while a man is professing and proving any article of faith in most express language, and by convincing demonstrations, that he should be suspected of heresy, merely because he chuses to leave out some public phrases, or happens to drop some popular argument in that controversy, or excuses some doubtful text of scripture from that service: And yet this hath been too often the shameful practice, and the just reproach of many christians, in whom the fury of an ignorant zeal has prevailed above the heavenly graces of light and love.

At the same time I will take the freedom to declare, that when a man excepts against one argument for any sacred truth as feeble, and treats another with jest and

raillery; when he tells you this text is not authentic, and the other has quite a different sense; when he cavils at this term because it is not precisely and expressly written in scripture, and will express the same truth in no terms at all, nor mention any one argument that is sufficient to prove it, I think that man gives too just a suspicion that he is no great friend to that doctrine; and if he should tell me I have no reason to deny his orthodoxy, yet I am sure at best, there is reason enough to doubt of his prudence. But to proceed to my design.

The method which I have chosen is what the learned called "analytic." Beginning with the first and plainest principle of natural religion, and then, supposing the revelation of scripture, I have attempted to lead my reader onward to the most easy and yet most satisfying evidence of this glorious mystery of the gospel. Nor did I think it necessary to stand still often to observe and answer every objection. For these many times break in upon the order of a discourse, and divert the mind from the train of argument; and as doctor *Knight* well observes in the preface to his late sermons on this subject, "Objecting is endless; the pursuit of which wears the mind, draws it too far from the main argument, and is apt to leave it in confusion and obscurity. Honest hearts and common understandings, whose concern is greater to discern truth, than to know the multiform windings of error, being once convinced of the goodness of the proofs that infer a doctrine, will be satisfied therewith, though they be not qualified to return an answer to every objector: For they well know that objections must fall, where the proofs of a doctrine are clear and conclusive."

I confess my thoughts sometimes ran out too far in a defence of some occasional positions, or incidental truths; but upon a review I have cut them all off from the body of this discourse, lest the thread of it should be too much interrupted, and have reserved them to be published in distinct essays or dissertations, if it be found needful.

After all our labours and studies, it is the good Spirit of God alone, who can lead us into all truth. If he please he can bless this little treatise which is the fruit of retirement, labour and prayer, and make it useful to instruct the ignorant, to settle the wavering, to guard those that are tempted, and to recover those that have gone astray. To this end I entreat my readers, that since it is but a little book, they would begin and read it through, that they may see all the parts of it in their proper connexion. Then I presume they will not take offence at any single sentence, which if separated from the rest of the work, might perhaps have given surprize or disgust to the weaker christians.

I conclude with an ardent address to heaven, that the sacred mysteries of our religion, and particularly this doctrine, which contains in it, and carries with it the substance and glory of the gospel, may prevail over all the clouds and powers of error. O may it never more be profaned by angry disputes and fruitless janglings! But be humbly received and piously improved, in order to pay all necessary honors and duties to the sacred three, which is the great design for which this doctrine was revealed: And thereby we shall effectually secure and evidence our own interest in the grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the love of the Father, and the communion of the holy Spirit, Amen.

T H E

T H E

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

O F T H E

T R I N I T Y.

I N T R O D U C T I O N.

TH E R E were many thousands of souls brought to the saving knowledge of God, and trained up for heaven by the various revelations which God gave to mankind before our Lord *Jesus Christ* came into the world. His own counsels and contrivances wrought powerfully for the salvation both of the patriarchs and the *jews* under those darker dispensations, without their particular and explicit knowledge of those divine methods whereby that very salvation was to be effected. These were reserved as a mystery hidden from ages and generations to be revealed by the gospel in these later times. Therefore the gospel is called the "revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest by a clear interpretation of the scriptures of the prophets, and made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, *Rom. xvi. 25, 26.* that is, that the nations might shew their obedience to a revealing God, by believing this doctrine now it is clearly revealed, and the prophets are explained.

It is the gospel that teaches us how God the Father sent his own Son to assume human nature, and therein to fulfil all righteousness, and to make full satisfaction for our sins by his sufferings and death, in order to restore us to the favour of God. It is the gospel that tells us how our Lord *Jesus Christ* ascended to heaven, and receiving from the Father the promise of the Spirit sends him down to renew our natures to holiness, and to restore us to the image of God. And it is the gospel that calls us to believe or trust in this Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, in order to be restored to the favour of God by his death and righteousness, and to be renewed after the divine image, by the operations of his holy Spirit.

Thus we are taught by the gospel, what hand the Son and Spirit have in our salvation as well as the Father. The Father appears here as our sovereign and offended governor, condescending to be reconciled, and appointing this method for our re-

covery: The Son of God appears as a redeemer or reconciler; and the Spirit of God as a sanctifier; and we are taught to get an actual interest in these blessings by faith.

Upon this account, when we are admitted into the profession of the christian faith, the names of the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, are joined together in the very ceremony of admission. We are baptized with this form of words, according to the institution of *Christ*, *Matt. xxviii. 19.* "Go teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost."

Thus though the ancient *jews* and patriarchs might be saved without an explicit knowledge of the special methods of this salvation, and the divine persons concerned in it, because they were not clearly revealed; yet since these are clearly revealed to us by *Christ* and his apostles in the new testament, and appointed to be a part both of our faith and our profession, it is evident that some knowledge of these divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and their several sacred offices, or an acquaintance with the doctrine of the blessed trinity, is now become a necessary part of our religion: So that I know not how any man can properly be called a christian without it.

It is certain, indeed, and must be confessed, that this sacred doctrine of the trinity has some great and unsearchable difficulties which attend the full explication of it, such as the wisest men in all ages have found too hard and too high for their comprehension; and yet it is as certain, that so much of this doctrine as is necessary to salvation, is plainly revealed in scripture, and easy to be understood; that the unlearned, and persons of the meanest capacity, may attain the knowledge of it: For the high way to heaven, which was to be revealed under the gospel, must be marked out with such plainness and evidence, "that the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein." *Isai. xxxv. 8.*

It shall be my business therefore, at present, to lead the unlearned christian, by soft and easy steps, into this mystery, so far as may furnish him with a sufficient knowledge of it for his own salvation, and shew him how to confirm and maintain his belief of it by the plain evidence of scripture, and to secure him from making shipwreck of his faith in a day of temptation. And I shall attempt to do all this without perplexing and embarrassing his mind with any of those various mazes of scheme and hypothesis, which men of learning have invented to explain and defend this sacred article of the christian faith.

The way wherein I shall pursue this design, is, by laying down the following propositions.

Proposition I. There is a God.

Proposition II. This God is the Creator of all things, the first and the eternal being, the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings, the sovereign Lord and disposer of all his works, the righteous governor of his intellectual creatures, and the proper object of their worship.

Proposition III. There is, and there can be, but one true God, but one such God as agrees with the foregoing description.

Proposition IV. Since there can be but one God, the peculiar, divine and distinguishing characters of godhead cannot belong to any other being.

Proposition V. And God himself is so jealous of his own honour, and so concerned to maintain the dignity of his godhead, as never to suffer these peculiar distinguishing characters to be ascribed to any other besides himself.

Proposition VI.

Proposition VI. He is also so kind and faithful to his creatures, as to tell them what are these peculiar and distinguishing characters of godhead, that they may not run into this mistake and guilt of ascribing them to any other.

Proposition VII. The peculiar and distinguishing characters of godhead, are those names, titles, attributes, works and worship which God has assumed to himself in his word, exclusive of any other being; and has either asserted them expressly to belong only to himself, or left it sufficiently evident in his word, that they belong to him alone.

Proposition VIII. Yet these very names, titles, attributes, works and worship, which are peculiar to God, and incommunicable to another, are ascribed to three, by God himself, in his word; which three are distinguished by the names of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Proposition IX. There are also some other circumstantial but convincing evidences, that the Son and the Spirit have the true and proper godhead ascribed to them as well as the Father.

Proposition X. Thence it necessarily follows, that these three, viz. the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, have such an intimate and real communion in that one godhead, as is sufficient to justify the ascription of those peculiar and distinguishing divine characters to them.

Proposition XI. Since there is, and can be, but one true God, these three, who have such a communion in godhead, may properly be called the one God, or, the only true God.

Proposition XII. Though the Father, Son, and Spirit are but one God, yet there are such distinct properties, actions, characters and circumstances ascribed to these three, as are usually ascribed to three distinct persons among men.

Proposition XIII. Therefore it has been the custom of the christian church, in almost all ages, to use the word person, in order to describe these three distinctions of Father, Son and Spirit, and to call them three distinct persons.

Proposition XIV. Though the sacred three are evidently and plainly discovered in scripture to be one and the same God, and three distinct personal agents or persons; yet the scripture hath not in plain and evident language explained, and precisely determined, the particular way and manner, "how these three persons are one God, or, how this one godhead is in three persons."

Proposition XV. Thence I infer, that it can never be necessary to salvation to know the precise way and manner, how one godhead subsists in these three personal agents, or, "how these three persons are one God."

Proposition XVI. Yet we ought to believe the general doctrine of the trinity, viz. That these three personal agents, Father, Son, and Spirit, have some real communion in one godhead, though we cannot find out the precise way and manner of explaining it.

Proposition XVII. And wheresoever we meet with any thing in scripture that is incommunicably divine, ascribed to either of these three persons, we may venture to take it in the plain and obvious sense of the words, since we believe the true and eternal godhead to belong to them all.

Proposition XVIII. Where any thing inferior to the dignity of godhead is really and properly attributed in scripture to the person of the Son, or the holy Spirit, it may be easily imputed to some inferior nature united to the godhead in that person, or to some inferior character or office sustained by that person.

Proposition XIX.

Proposition XIX. Nor do these inferior nature or natures, characters or agencies, at all hinder our firm belief of the godhead of these three persons, which is so plainly expressed in scripture; nor should it abate or diminish our sacred regards to them.

Proposition XX. We are bound, therefore, to pay divine honours to each of the sacred three, viz. the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, according to their distinct characters and offices assigned them in scripture.

Proposition XXI. In so doing, we shall effectually secure our own salvation: For the scripture has made our salvation to depend on those offices which these divine persons sustain, and the honours due to them according to those offices, rather than upon any deep philosophical notions of their essence and personalities, any nice and exact acquaintance with their mysterious union and distinction.

Proposition XXII. The man, therefore, who professes each of the sacred three, to have sufficient divine power and capacity to sustain the characters, and fulfil the offices attributed to them in scripture, and pays due honour to them according to those offices, may justly be owned by me, and received as a christian brother; though we may differ much in our notions and opinions about the explication of the blessed trinity, or though we may both be ignorant or doubtful of the true way of explaining it.

Now if these propositions are found agreeable to the mind and will of God in his word, then may his blessed Spirit furnish me with clearness of thought, with force of argument, and happiness of expression to explain and prove them, so far as to enlighten the understanding, and satisfy the conscience of humble and sincere christians in this great and glorious doctrine of the trinity; that they may pay their distinct honours to the sacred three, in this world of darkness and imperfection, and walk on rejoicing in their way to the world of perfect life and happiness! Amen.

P R O P O S I T I O N I.

There is a G O D.

IT must be known by the light of nature, that there is a God, before we can reasonably have any thing to do with scripture, or believe his word. Now the shortest and plainest way to come at the knowledge of God by the light of nature, is by considering the whole frame of this visible world, and the various parts of it. Hereby we shall not only find that there is a God, but we shall learn in a great measure what is his nature also.

A man cannot open his eyes but he sees many objects round about him which did not make themselves: The birds, the beasts, and the fishes, the herbs, and the trees, the fire, and the water, all seem to confess that they were not their own creators, for they cannot preserve themselves. Nor did we give being to ourselves or to them, because we can neither preserve ourselves nor them in being.

Besides, there is an infinite variety of instances in the constant regular motions of the planets, the influences of the sun and moon, in the wonderful composition of plants and animals, and in their several properties and operations, as well as in the very structure of our own bodies, and the faculties of our minds; which sufficiently discover there must be some superior and divine power and wisdom, which both contrived and created their natures and our's, and gave being both to them and us.

Thus it appears that the first notion we have of God, by the light of nature, is the creator of all things. Thence it follows, that he must be before all those things which he has made; therefore he must be the first of beings.

And

And it is plain, that he could have no beginning, and that there was no time when God was not; for then he could never have begun to be; since there was nothing that could create him, nor can there be any reason why he should of himself start out of nothing into being at any moment, if he had not been before: So that since we have proved that there is a God, we may be sure that he ever was, or that he was from all eternity.

Now the same argument which proves that he had no beginning, will infer also, that he can have no end: For as nothing could give him being, nothing can take it away. He depends not on any thing for leave to exist, since nothing in nature could possibly concur or contribute any thing toward his existence. Nor does his being depend on any arbitrary act of his own will, for he did not create himself. Nor can he himself wish, or will, or desire not to be, because he is perfectly wise, and knows it is best for him for ever to exist; and, therefore, he must exist, or be for ever.

And this is what the learned call a necessary being; that is, one who ever was, and ever must be; without beginning and without end. And this, in many of the writings, is justly made to be the great and eminent distinction betwixt God and the creature; viz. that the creatures might be, or not be, as God pleases; but God always was, and always will be: He must necessarily have a being from everlasting to everlasting.

As his works discover his existence, or his being; so the greatness of his works shews the greatness of his power. He that made all things out of mere nothing, must be almighty: He that has contrived all things with such exquisite art, must be alwise and alknowing; and he that has furnished this lower world with such innumerable rich varieties of light and food, of colours, sounds, smells, and tastes, and materials for all the conveniences of life to support and to entertain our natures, he must be a being of unspeakable goodness.

It appears yet with fuller evidence, that God is the chiefest, the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings, when we consider more particularly, that all the power, knowledge, wisdom, and goodness, all the virtues, and excellencies, and the very natures of all other beings are derived from God, and given to the creatures by God their Creator; and therefore he must, in some glorious and eminent manner, possess all perfections and excellencies himself, for nothing can give to another that which itself has not.

Thus "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work," as the holy *Psalmist* assures us, *Psal.* xix. 1. And thus, "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, *Rom.* i. 20.

The light of reason, or nature, further teaches us, that such an almighty being, who by his own power and wisdom has created all things out of nothing, must needs be the sovereign Lord, the absolute possessor and proprietor of all his creatures, they must be all at his disposal, and under his government. And as for the intelligent parts of his creation, such as men and angels, it is the very law of their natures, that they ought to love, worship and obey him that made them; to pray to him for what they want, and to praise him for what they receive, and thence he becomes the proper object of worship.

Reason itself assures us, that he who hath shewn such exquisite wisdom, even in the formation of his inanimate creatures, and in his disposal and management of them agreeably to those purposes for which they are fitted, will manifest also the same wisdom in governing his intelligent creatures, and bestow those rewards or punishments

punishments on them for which they are fitted, agreeable to their tempers, characters and actions. And this is properly called the righteousness or equity of God, or his governing justice.

I have been much the longer in this proof of the being of God, in order to introduce the next proposition which expresses his nature, and contains the common and general sense of the word God.

P R O P O S I T I O N I I .

God is the Creator of all things, the first and the eternal being, the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings, the sovereign Lord and disposer of all his works, the righteous governor of his intellectual creatures, and the proper object of their worship.

THIS description of God is drawn with apparent evidence from the very proof of his being. The same light of nature or reason which tells us that there is a God, does at the same time tell us what God is : and this being the plainest and the most obvious and easy way of coming to the knowledge of his existence, these must be the first, the plainest, and the easiest notions of godhead or divine nature, that mankind naturally obtains and receives.

But since the knowledge of God, by the light of reason, is so low, and feeble, and obscure in the greatest part of mankind, he has condescended to reveal both his being and his nature in his written word. This hath been attested with so many divine signs and miracles, as prove it beyond all controversy to be the word of the living God : And in this word of his he hath described his nature in the same manner as the light of reason would describe it ; though in greater perfection, and with fuller assurance.

When, therefore, we use the word God properly, absolutely, and without any special limitation ; some of these ideas will naturally come into the mind, and especially those of almighty, alwise, the creator, and the eternal. Therefore this has been the common sense of the word in heathen nations, even from all antiquity, and amongst all the thinking part of mankind, who have acknowledged one God only ; and this is the general sense of the word God in the scripture, as might be made to appear by many quotations, if it were needful.

Hence it will follow, that those persons who make the word God to signify mere authority, dominion, or government, do much diminish the idea of it ; they contract and narrow the sense of it in opposition to the common usage of the word in all languages, ages and nations, wherein the unity of God has been professed ; they divert it from the common meaning of it in the lips of *jews*, heathens, and christians. And they would do well to consider, whether this is not done merely to serve some particular schemes of their own, and to support some hypothesis or opinion of their's, which otherwise could never be obtained.

I confess, the word God is used sometimes in the bible both in a figurative, and in a limited or imperfect sense.

I. It is used in a figurative or improper sense, to signify some character among creatures that hath a likeness or resemblance to any part of this description of God. So *Moses* the prophet is called " a god to *Pbaraob*," *Exod. vii. 1.* Because he carried divine authority with him in his message to *Pbaraob*, and wrought divine works

works before him, which were representations of God's government and his power. So angels are called gods, *Psal.* xcvi. 7. and in many other places, for the same reason. So prophets, judges and magistrates are called gods; *Psal.* lxxxii. 1. "He judgeth among the gods." Verse 6. "I said ye are gods." *John* x. 35. "He called them gods to whom the word of God came;" because they spoke and acted under divine influence, or in the name and authority of God.

2. This word God is used also in many scriptures in a limited or imperfect sense, to signify the object of worship, which is one part of the description of the true God. So *Isa.* xlv. 15. — "yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it." *Isa.* xxxvi. 18. "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land." Verse 19. "Where are the gods of *Hamath* and *Arpad*? that is, their idols whom they worshipped. *Micah* iv. 5. "The people will walk every one in the name of his god," that is, that being, either real or imaginary, whom they worshipped. And probably, in this sense, the devil is called "the god of this world," *2 Cor.* iv. 4. because he was worshipped by the heathens under various names, as well as because he seems to have great power in this sinful world, by the permission of God.

But after all, there is, and there must be, such a distinction between the word God, when it is applied peculiarly to the true God, the Creator, and when it is applied to creatures, or to idols, as that the creature may not be mistaken for the Creator; nor an idol for the living and the true God.

Wheresoever, therefore, the word God is used in scripture, and it does not evidently appear to be used in any of these figurative, diminutive, and imperfect senses, we are naturally and reasonably led to understand it concerning the alwise and almighty Creator and governor of all things, the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings.

P R O P O S I T I O N III.

There is, and there can be, but one true God, but one such God as agrees with the foregoing description.

THE unity or oneness of the godhead, is a great truth derived from the light of nature, as well as from scripture.

The light of nature tells us, that there can be but one, who is the first, the wisest, and the best of beings; there can be but one almighty: And many of the ancient sages, in the heathen world, have found out this truth by their own reason, and maintained it with force of argument.

If I were to talk like a philosopher upon this head, I would prove that there could be but one God, because the very nature of God implies in it full perfection and complete alfficiency; so that he can stand in need of nothing, because he has a sufficiency in himself for all conceivable purposes and ends. If there were therefore any other God, that other God would be a needless one, or an unnecessary being, which would destroy the very nature and notion of godhead; for God is a necessary being, or a being of absolute necessity, as we have proved before, and he cannot but exist.

But as my design is to assist the understanding of the meanest christians, I will rather have recourse to the plain words of scripture: And there are many places in the word of God where he asserts his own unity; *Deut.* vi. 4. "Hear, O *Israel*,

the Lord our God is one Lord." *Exod. xx. 3.* "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." *Isai. xliii. 10.* "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." *Isai. xlv. 8.* "Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God, I know not any." *Isai. xlv. 5.* I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me."

The *jews* of old were so ready to be led away to the idolatry of their neighbour nations, and to worship more gods than one, that the blessed God thought it proper in his word to give them frequent repetitions of this great truth, to guard them against the danger of acknowledging any gods besides himself: And it being a great part of the design of the gospel, to reform the heathen world from polytheism, or the worship of many gods, *Christ* and his apostles have taken care in the new testament to inculcate this divine truth again in express language. *Mark xii. 29.* The words of *Moses* are cited by our Lord *Jesus*, as the foundation of all religion. The first of all the commandments is, "Hear, O *Israel*, the Lord our God is one Lord." *Mark x. 18.* "There is none good but one, that is God." By which he means, there is none has such original and eternal and allsufficient goodness as he; *Gal. iii. 20.* "God is one." *Eph. iv. 6.* "One God and Father of all, who is above all." *1 Cor. viii. 4, 5, 6.* "An idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one; for though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many and lords many; but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things."

We must, therefore, take care in searching out and expressing the doctrine of the trinity, that we do not make two or three distinct gods, lest we break in upon the foundation of all religion, whether natural, *jewish*, or christian.

P R O P O S I T I O N IV.

Since there can be but one God, the peculiar, divine and distinguishing characters of godhead cannot belong to any other being.

THIS proposition is so evident, that I have no need to spend time in proving, that the essential and distinguishing marks and qualities of any one being can never belong to another: For otherwise there could be no certain distinction betwixt any two different beings in nature; and we should run into perpetual mistakes hourly, and take one for the other. If the distinguishing characters of fire could belong to earth or water, or the peculiar marks of human nature could be found in plants or brute animals, this would bring everlasting confusion into the affairs of life, and common language. Much more necessary is it that there should be the most evident marks of distinction between God and a creature, lest we should bring the same confusion into all our religion and worship, by mistaking the creature for God, and God for the creature.

P R O

P R O P O S I T I O N V.

God himself is so jealous of his own honour, and so concerned to maintain the dignity of his godhead, as never to suffer these peculiar distinguishing characters of godhead to be ascribed to any other besides himself.

IT is fit that godhead should support it's own dignity, and bear it's character high above all creatures; otherwise God could not be just and true to himself. It is necessary that the almighty maker, and sovereign governor of all, should maintain his state and majesty, and suffer nothing, which is not God, to approach too near the grandeur of godhead; nor will he bear it without high resentment and divine indignation.

This is what is properly called his jealousy in scripture. He is often described as a jealous God, and will not suffer creatures to share with him in his incommunicable glories. *Exod. xx. 3, 4, 5.* "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." *Deut. iv. 23, 24.* "Take heed to yourselves lest you make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee; for the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." *Deut. vi. 13, 14, 15.* "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name: Ye shall not go after other gods, the gods of the people which are round about you, for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you, lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth." To the same purpose speaks *Joshua*, chapter xxiv. verse 19. *Deut. xxxii. 16, 17.* "They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger; they sacrificed to devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." verses 19, 20, 21. "When the Lord saw it he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and his daughters: And he said, I will hide my face from them; they have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities." Such are the awful manifestations of God, in a way of jealousy, for his own name and the dignity of his godhead.

The heart of God is so much set upon it to exclude all rivals or competitors from any share in the prerogatives of godhead, that he borrows one of his names from his jealousy in this matter; *Exod. xxxiv. 14.* "Thou shalt worship no other God; for the Lord whose name is jealous, is a jealous God."

He declares solemnly, that his honour should not be given to another; nor will he bear that any thing should come near him, or be likened to him in the glory of his nature; *Ifai. xlii. 8.* "I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another." *Ifai. xlvi. 9.* "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me." *Ifai. xl. 18.* "To whom will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Verse 25. "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the holy one." And when he threatens his vengeance against the worship of that which is not God, he speaks in the fire and fury of his jealousy, as it is often expressed in the language of the prophets.

P R O P O S I T I O N VI.

God is also so kind and faithful to his creatures, as to tell them what are these peculiar and distinguishing characters of godhead, that they may not run into this mistake and guilt of ascribing them to any other.

THOUGH men of learning and retirement among the heathens, who have devoted themselves to the study of philosophy, have found out several of these peculiar characters of godhead; and the light of reason, if well improved, is sufficient to teach all men so much of God, as to leave them "without excuse," *Rom. i. 19, 20.* Yet in our fallen and degenerate state we are so thoughtless and foolish, and our understanding is so feeble, so rash and giddy, that we are ready to commit mistakes in this solemn and important point. Therefore the blessed God in great condescension has told us in his word, what are the peculiar glories that belong to his nature, and the characters by which he will be known and distinguished from all that is not God.

And since he has separated a people to himself, and promised to give them the knowledge of himself, in order to his glory and their own happiness, he has been so kind to them, and so faithful to his covenant, as to mark out those distinguishing characters of godhead, by which he will be known, in a very evident manner; and that not in a single text or two, but in many places of holy scripture, that they may not thoughtlessly run into this hainous mistake, of ascribing godhead to any inferior natures, and incur the dreadful penalties which his jealousy has threatened.

P R O P O S I T I O N VII.

The peculiar and distinguishing characters of godhead are those names, titles, attributes, works and worship, which God has assumed to himself in his word, exclusive of any other being; and has either asserted them expressly to belong only to himself, or left it sufficiently evident in his word that they belong to him alone.

HERE I shall not insist on all the peculiar characters of godhead that may be found in scripture, but mention only a few, viz. such as in my opinion seem to carry the clearest evidence with them.

The peculiar divine names are chiefly these two; viz. the name *Jehovah*, and the name **GOD**, with some additional word of honour, as the true God, the great God, the mighty God, the only wise God, God and none else, and God blessed for ever.

The peculiar divine titles are, the God of *Abraham*, the Lord of hosts, King of kings, and Lord of lords, the first and the last.

The peculiar divine attributes are, omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, eternity and immutability.

The peculiar divine works are, the creation and conservation of all things, the changing of the heart, and raising the dead.

The last peculiar character of godhead, is divine worship.

And

And, I think, the words of scripture where these characters of godhead are mentioned, will be most easily compared together, and set in the fairest light, if I refer them all to be cited under this next proposition.

P R O P O S I T I O N V I I I .

Yet these very names, titles, attributes, works and worship, which are peculiar to God, and incommunicable to another, are ascribed to three by God himself in his word; which three are distinguished by the names Father, Son, and holy Spirit.

ONE can hardly read a leaf of scripture, especially of the new testament, but we find some mention made of these three glorious agents, the Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost: And though these words are not to be understood precisely in the same sense as when applied to men; yet the meaning of these words must answer the common use of them in some main respect; else surely such words would not have been used.

And if we consult the general sense of them in scripture, we shall find that this word Father signifies some superior character, from whom the Son derives, at least, his character of Sonship, and upon whom he depends so far as he is a Son, by whom he is sent on glorious errands.

The Son, who is also sometimes called the "only begotten of the Father," must have some very extraordinary relation to the Father more than any other being, and is often employed by the Father.

The holy Spirit has this title eminently given him as a being of a spiritual nature, as a prime agent in the affairs of the Father and Son; even as the spirit of a man knows and manages the affairs of a man; and he is called holy, because his great work is to sanctify and to make holy the children of men.

But of these things I shall speak more hereafter. My work is here to prove, that all three have the peculiar characters of godhead.

That the incommunicable divine names, &c. are ascribed to God the Father, the first in the sacred trinity, is universally agreed by all christians of all parties, there is therefore no need to spend time in proving it.

My present business, therefore, shall be to shew under each of these five heads, viz. names, titles, attributes, works and worship, what are the peculiar characters of godhead, and prove, first, that they are ascribed to *Christ*, the Son of God; and then, that several of them are ascribed also to the holy Spirit.

Before we enter on this argument, it may be proper to observe, that all parties allow that the second person in the trinity, or our Lord *Jesus Christ*, is sometimes called the angel or messenger of his Father; sometimes his servant, his wisdom, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, the life, the light, &c. But the chief names he is called by, are, *viz.* "huios," the Son, or, *ἰ λόγος*, "logos," the reason or word of God. I mention this only to shew, that where we meet with him in scripture under these various names, we may know it is the same person. Nor need I take pains to prove this here, since I design to mention and make use of no place of scripture where any of these appellations can be controverted, without a particular vindication of them to this sense.

I proceed now to the argument proposed.

I. "The names of God ascribed to *Christ*."

v. Jeshovab.

1. *Jehovah* is a name peculiar to God; which we may infer from the very composition of the word, according to the opinion of the best *hebrew* critics: For it signifies being itself, he who was, and who is, and who shall be; and therein seems to denote the eternity and the unchangeableness of God, whose name is "I am that I am," *Exod.* iii. 14. And answers to the description of God; *Rev.* iv. 8. "The Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

But there are most express scriptures which prove the name *Jehovah* to be incommunicable; *Psal.* lxxxiii. 18. "Thou, whose name alone is *Jehovah*, art the most high over all the earth." *Isai.* xlv. 5. "I am *Jehovah*, and there is none else, there is no God besides me." *Isai.* xlii. 8. "I am *Jehovah*, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another."

Here let it be noted, for the benefit of unlearned christians, that where the word Lord is written in great letters in the old testament [LORD] the word in the *hebrew* is *Jehovah*; where it is written in small letters [Lord] it is some other word in the *hebrew*, as *Adon* or *Adonai*, &c. except perhaps one or two places where the printer hath made a mistake.

Now this name *Jehovah* is ascribed to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, or the Son of God, *Jer.* xxiii. 6. The righteous branch that was to be raised unto *David*, was the promised *Messiah* or *Christ*. And "this is the name whereby he shall be called the Lord our righteousness." It is evident, that this name is not ascribed to *Christ* as the name *Jehovah Nissi*, [the Lord is my banner] is given to an altar, *Exod.* xvii. 15. Or *Jehovah-shalom*, *Judges* vi. 24. [the Lord is peace.] Or as the name *Jehovah-shammah* [the Lord is there] is given to a city, *Ezek.* xlvi. 35. Because it is possible in all those places that God the Father may be signified. But *Christ* must be the person meant in these words, whether they be translated *Jehovah* our righteousness, or, *Jehovah* is our righteousness; for it is a promise concerning the times of the new testament, where *Christ* is often described as our righteousness, but God the Father is never described so, *1 Cor.* i. 30. *Christ Jesus* "is made unto us wisdom and righteousness."

There are other places in the old testament where the name *Jehovah* is given to *Christ* upon this very account; *Isa.* xlv. 24, 25. "Surely shall one say, In *Jehovah* have I righteousness and strength: In *Jehovah* shall all the seed of *Israel* be justified:" Which in the new testament are thus interpreted, *Rom.* v. 18. "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." *2 Cor.* v. 21. *Christ*, "who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Christ is called *Jehovah*, *Isa.* vi. 1, 9, 10. "I saw the Lord *Jehovah* sitting upon a throne, and he said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not; make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed." Compared with *John* xii. 40, 41. "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said *Isaias*, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." It is manifest enough to any whose preconceived opinions do not turn them aside from the obvious sense of scripture, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* is the person here meant.

So *Zech.* xi. 12, 13. "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver: And the Lord [*Jehovah*] said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized

prized at of them!" Compared with *Matth. xxvii. 9.* "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken, They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued." The prophet here tells us, it was the Lord *Jehovab* that was thus valued, and that was *Cbrist*, as *St. Matthew* applies it.

That the name *Jehovab* is applied also to *Cbrist* in other places, I shall take frequent notice.

2. The name GOD, with some additional honour, is another name whereby God is distinguished from creatures; as, "The true God, the great and mighty God, the only wise God, the only God, or God and none else, and God blessed for ever." For though upon some special account the word GOD is sometimes applied to a creature, yet it is without any honourable addition or epithet joined to it.

1. "The true God" is a distinguishing name. *John xvii. 3.* "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God." Now *Cbrist* is so called, *1 John v. 20, 21.* "And 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 Cbrist*. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols, Amen." It is very unlikely that the apostle *John* should conclude his epistle with such a solemn charge against idolatry, or the worshipping that which is not God, and yet in the foregoing verse leave his expression concerning the true God so easily and so naturally to be interpreted concerning *Cbrist Jesus*, if he were not the true God.

It is farther evident, that he who is called the eternal life in this verse, is the true God; and it is as evident, that *Cbrist* is called the life, and the eternal life, in the same epistle, *1 John i. 2.* "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and shew unto you that eternal life, [that is, the Son of God] which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

2. "The great and the mighty God" is a distinguishing name. *Deut. x. 17.* "The Lord God, your God, is a great God, a mighty, and a terrible." *Jer. xxxii. 18, 19.* "The great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is his name. Great in counsel, and mighty in works." Which appellations are given to *Cbrist*. *Titus ii. 13.* "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour *Jesus Cbrist*, or as it may be properly translated, our great God and Saviour *Jesus Cbrist*." *Isai. ix. 6.* "To us a child is born, to us a son is given, his name shall be called wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God."

3. "The only wise God" is a distinguishing name. *1 Tim. i. 17.* "To the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen." *Rom. xvi. 27.* "To God only wise be glory through *Jesus Cbrist* for ever, Amen." Which character is applied to *Cbrist* himself. *Jude, verses 24, 25.* "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen." Now that this doxology is ascribed to *Cbrist*, it appears not only from this that he is called our Saviour, which is *Cbrist's* special title; but it is he who shall present the church without fault to himself, or, before the presence of his own glory. See *Eph. v. 25, 27.* "*Cbrist* loved the church, and gave himself for it,—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle,—and without blemish."

4. "The only God," or, "God and none else," is another distinguishing name. *Deut. iv. 35, 39.* "The Lord he is God, and there is none else besides him." *Isai. xlv. 5.* "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God beside me." Now whosoever will read the latter end of the xlv. chapter of *Isaiah*, from verse 15. to verse

verse 25. will find several expressions of the same kind. "I am the Lord, there is no God else beside me; I am God, and there is none else;" and yet they are applied to this person, who is eminently called the Saviour, verses 15, 21. in whom "Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation," verse 17. To whom "all the ends of the earth are to look that they may be saved," verse 22. In whom we "have righteousness and strength," verse 24. In whom "the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory," verse 25. And to whom "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear," verse 23. All which characters belong to our Lord *Jesus Christ* in the common language of the new testament, and this 23d verse is particularly cited and applied to him. *Rom. xiv. 10, 11.* "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of *Christ*: For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." And whosoever will read that chapter from the 6th to the 12th verse, will find the words Lord, God, and *Christ*, used very promiscuously for one another.

5. "God blessed for ever" is also a distinguishing name. *2 Cor. xi. 31.* "The God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, which is blessed for evermore." *Rom. i. 25.* They "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen." Yet this name is given to *Christ*, *Rom. ix. 5.* "*Christ* who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen."

Here it is proper to be noted, that when the word God is applied to creatures in scripture, there is generally some degrading circumstance, or some diminishing expression added in the same place, to exclude them from any interest or share in the true godhead. But when it is ascribed to *Jesus Christ*, there are characters of additional honour often joined to it, to shew that he is the true God. So if *Satan* be called god, it is but the "god of this world," *2 Cor. iv. 4.* If *Moses* be called god, it is a god that was made, a god only to *Pharaoh*, and a god whose brother was a man. *Exod. vii. 1.* "I have made thee a god to *Pharaoh*, and *Aaron* thy brother shall be thy prophet." If magistrates are called gods, they are mortal gods; *Psal. lxxxii. 6.* "I have said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men." If angels are called gods, they are such gods as worship a superior God, *Psal. xcvi. 7.* "Worship him, all ye gods." But our Lord *Jesus* is called the "true God, the great and the mighty God, the only wise God, God, and there is none besides him, God blessed for evermore," as we have shewn already; and that God, whom other gods, or angels, worship, as we shall shew hereafter.

II. The titles of God ascribed to *Christ*.

1. "The God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*." This was the glorious name whereby God described himself when he sent *Moses* to fetch *Israel* out of the land of bondage; *Exod. iii. 6, 15.* "I am the God of thy father, the God of *Abraham*, &c. And God said to *Moses*, thus shalt thou say to the children of *Israel*, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, and the God of *Jacob*, hath sent me to you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

And yet the person who speaks this, is called "the angel of the Lord." Verse 2. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush; and it is plain, that he who sate or dwelt in the bush was God himself, *Exod. iii. 16.* and 4, 5. This is "the Lord God of the fathers, the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Isaac*, the God of *Jacob*, who appeared to *Moses* in the bush;" all this is confirmed in the new testament, *Acts vii. 30.* where this history is repeated. And when

when *Moses* would bless the tribe of *Joseph* with a divine blessing and the favour of God, he calls it the "good will of him that dwelt in the bush," *Deut.* xxxiii. 16.

Here I shall take occasion to enlarge a little on these appearances of *Christ* to the patriarchs.

Christ Jesus is that God who called to *Abraham* and bid him offer up his Son, *Gen.* xxii. 1, &c. for he is called the angel of the Lord, verse 11. when he "called to him out of heaven, and said—Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thy only Son from me," that is, from that God who commanded him to be offered up. This was the angel of the covenant, and yet the God of *Abraham*.

"The angel which redeemed *Jacob* from all evil, is the God before whom his fathers *Abraham* and *Isaac* did walk, and the God which fed him all his life long," *Gen.* xlviii. 15, 16.

And it is universally agreed by the ancient and modern writers, that this angel was the same who appeared to *Abraham*, when "the word of the Lord came to him in a vision, *Gen.* xv. 1, 2. This was the Lord who appeared to him. *Gen.* xvii. 1. "And said, I am the almighty God." This is one of those "three men who appeared to *Abraham*," *Gen.* xviii. 1, 2. who is called *Jehovah*, verse 13, 14, &c. "This was the man who wrestled with *Jacob*," *Gen.* xxxii. 24. who is called God, verses 28, 30. who is styled the angel of God, the angel of the Lord, and the LORD, or *Jehovah*, promiscuously, in his appearance to *Gideon*, *Judg.* vi. 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23. The captain of the Lord's host, appearing to *Joshua*, who is called the LORD, or *Jehovah*, *Josh.* v. 14, 15. compared with vi. 2. who is also the angel of God's presence, *Isai.* lxiii. 9. "The angel or messenger of the covenant," *Mal.* iii. 1. and "the angel in whom is the name of God," *Exod.* xxiii. 20, 21. or in whom godhead dwells; that is, the *Messiah*, or our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who appeared often to the patriarchs in a visible shape, as a prelude or token of his future incarnation.

Nor did he favour the patriarchs only with such a visit, but the prophets were blessed with it too. *Isai.* vi. is a plain instance of it, as we have shewn before, where *Isaiab* saw *Christ* in great magnificence and glory.

Ezekiel had the same favour also, and that frequently, *Ezek.* i. 26. "And above the firmament that was over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a throne—and the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." Verse 28. "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord, or *Jehovah*; and when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake." Chapter iii. 23. He enjoyed the same vision. And chapter viii. 1, 2, 3, 4. He was favoured with it again, and "the glory of the God of *Israel* was there." chapter x. 15, 19, 20. The same again. And xi. 22.

Amos also saw God in the form of a man or angel, *Amos* vii. 7. for "he stood upon a wall with a plumb-line in his hand," and talked with him. And chapter ix. 1. He stood on the altar and spake to him.

Zechariab, in the first six chapters of his prophecy, conversed with the angel of the Lord in the form of a man, as chapter i. 9. and ii. 1, 3. and iii. 1, &c. Yet this angel sometimes seems to be the same with the Lord or *Jehovah*, as i. 19, 20. and ii. 1, 3, 5. and iii. 1, 2.

Now that most or all of these appearances was *Jesus Christ*, is generally owned by christians of all ages, and all parties; there are scarce any that have denied it.

And

And it is evident, that in these and other places this angel assumes the peculiar and distinguishing titles of the great God to himself: In his appearance to the more ancient fathers he called himself God almighty, as in *Exod. vi. 4.* But when he appeared to *Moses*, he made himself known by his name *Jehovah*, verses 2, 3. "And God spake unto *Moses*, and said unto him, I am the Lord, or *Jehovah*: And I appeared to *Abraham*, unto *Isaac*, and to *Jacob*, by the name of God almighty; but by my name *JEHOVAH* was I not known to them."

Now it was not possible for those to whom he appeared to distinguish him from the true and eternal God, when he used those express words, "I am God almighty, or allsufficient, I am *Jehovah*, the Lord; I am that I am; I am the God of *Abraham*, &c. and consequently they were necessarily exposed to the danger of idolatry, and in a manner, I may say, they were unavoidably led into it, if the person speaking to them were not really the true and eternal God, the proper object of divine worship.

It seems to me but a poor and feeble evasion to say, that all these magnificent and distinguishing names and titles of the great and blessed God might be assumed by the angel, or *Christ*, though he were but a creature, because he came in the name, and with the authority of the true God. 1. It is by no means agreeable to the majesty and high jealousy of God to give his name and glory thus to another, without any sufficient and most evident token of distinction. 2. It was too assuming and presumptuous in a creature thus to personate God, his maker, without some present and apparent distinguishing marks of his own inferiority. And, 3. It was too hard and invincible a temptation to *Abraham*, and *Jacob*, and *Moses* themselves, to practise idol-worship, and give divine honors to that which was not God.

It is therefore made clear to me with abundant evidence, that in all these appearances the true and eternal God himself was present; and, as it is expressed concerning *Christ*, *Col. ii. 9.* so in those figures and appearances, whether of light or fire, of a man or an angel, there dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily.

2. "The Lord of hosts" is another glorious and distinguishing title of God: He that is supreme over all the hosts or armies of heaven and earth. *2 Sam. vi. 2.* "God, whose name is called the Lord of hosts." *2 Sam. vii. 26.* "The Lord of hosts is God over *Israel*." *Psal. xxiv. 10.* "The Lord of hosts is the king of glory." *Isa. i. 24.* "Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty one of *Israel*." *Isa. vi. 3.* "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." And there are a multitude of places beside to this purpose in the word of God.

Yet this title is applied to *Christ* even in some of these very places, where it is mentioned as God's distinguishing character; *Hosea xii. 3, 4, 5.* where the history of *Jacob's* wrestling with a man or angel is recorded, it is said, "By his strength he had power with God, yea he had power over the angel, and prevailed: He wept and made supplication unto him: He found him in *Bethel*, and there he spake with us. Even the Lord God of hosts, the Lord is his memorial." You see here that God, the Lord God of hosts, is the angel with whom *Jacob* wrestled. So *Isa. viii. 13, 14:* "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of *Israel*." Which is interpreted concerning *Jesus Christ*, *1 Pet. ii. 6, 8.* He is the "chief corner stone laid in *Zion* elect and precious," as *Isa. xxviii. 16.* "and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence." Which appears

pears still with greater evidence, if you compare *Pfal.* cxviii. 22. with *Matth* xxi. 42. and *Luke* ii. 34.

Many other instances of this kind we may find in the same prophet, as *Isai.* liv. 5. "Thy maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy redeemer the holy one of *Israel*, the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" compared with *2 Cor.* xi. 2. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to *Christ*." God, our maker, is our husband, as the prophet speaks; and *Christ*, our redeemer, is the one husband to whom we are espoused by the apostle. But I proceed to the next.

3. "King of kings, and Lord of lords," is another title which God assumes to himself, *Deut.* x. 17. "The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God and a mighty, and a terrible," &c. *1 Tim.* vi. 15, 16. "The blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, whom no man hath seen or can see: To him be honour and power everlasting, Amen." Yet this title is ascribed to *Christ*, *Rev.* xvii. 14. "The lamb shall overcome, for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings." And *Rev.* xix. 13, 16. "His name is called the word of God; as *John* i. 1. "And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh a name written King of kings, and Lord of lords.

4. "The first and the last" is a peculiar title of God, that is, the first cause and last end of all things. He by whom all things were made, and for whose glory they were designed. He who existed before all; and should all things cease to be, he would exist for ever the same, *Isai.* xli. 4. "I the Lord the first and with the last, I am he," *Isai.* xlv. 6. "Thus saith the Lord, the King of *Israel* and his redeemer, the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God." So the xlvi. of *Isaiab*, verses 11, 12. "I will not give my glory to another. Hearken to me, O *Jacob*, I am he, I am the first, I also am the last." Yet our Lord *Jesus* assumes this title himself, *Rev.* i. 17, 18. "Fear not, I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," Amen. And *Rev.* ii. 8. "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive." *Rev.* i. 11. "I am alpha and omega, the first and the last." These verses without controversy belong to *Christ*; and perhaps the 8th verse also, "I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the almighty."

III. Attributes of God ascribed to *Christ*.

These are omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence, eternity and immutability.

1. "Omniscience" or the knowledge of all things, and particularly of the heart of man, and his secret thoughts. This is a peculiar property of God, *Ija.* xli. 21, 23. "Produce your cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of *Jacob*, shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." *1 Kings* viii. 39. "For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." *Amos* iv. 13. "He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth to men what is his thought, the Lord, the God of hosts is his name." *Jer.* xvii. 9, 10. "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of their doings.

Now this universal and extensive knowledge of all things, even of the hearts and of the thoughts of men, which is so special a property of godhead, is ascribed to

Jesus Christ almost in the same words in which it is attributed to the Father; *John* x. i. 17. *Peter* saith to *Christ*, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." *John* ii. 24, 25. "Jesus knew all men, and needed not that any one should testify of men; for he knew what was in man." *Matth.* xii. 25. "And *Jesus* knew their thoughts." *Rev.* ii. 23. "All the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins, and the hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works." Where we may remark the emphasis of this expression; *Christ* does not say merely, "I can search the heart and try the reins;" but, "I am he which searcheth the hearts," &c. using the very words of *Jeremiah* the prophet, as though he would have said, that very character of godhead belongs to me, I am that omniscient being.

2. "Omnipresence" is a distinguishing perfection of God, which implies the immediate presence of God in all places; taking cognizance of, and managing all the affairs of his universal kingdom, *Psal.* cxxxix. 7. "Whither shall I fly from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." And this is the common consolation that God gives to his people wheresoever they are; "Fear not, for I am with thee," *Isai.* xli. 10. and xliii. 5, &c. And he gives this encouragement to his people, and this terror to his enemies, *Jer.* xxiii. 24. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord: Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."

And so does our Lord *Jesus Christ* fill heaven, and earth, and all things; for the church is called "the body of *Christ*, and the fulness of him that filleth all in all." *Ephes.* i. 23. He promises his presence with his people in the same divine language, *Matth.* xviii. 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *Matth.* xxviii. 20. "Lo I am with you always to the end of the world."

The presence of the Lord *Jehovah*, both in heaven and on earth at the same time, seems to be intimated, *Gen.* xix. 24. "Then the Lord (*Jehovah*) rained upon *Sodom* and upon *Gomorrab* brimstone and fire from the Lord (*Jehovah*) out of heaven." What has been said before concerning the appearances of *Christ*, as the angel of the covenant to the patriarchs, makes it evident that the *Jehovah* on earth, who had been a little before talking with *Abraham* about the destruction of *Sodom*, was our Lord *Jesus Christ*: And since there is but one *Jehovah*, he must be the same with *Jehovah* in heaven; and this is further confirmed by a parallel text, *John* iii. 13. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

3. "Omnipotence," or almighty power, is another divine attribute that I shall name in this place. "Almighty" is so peculiar a character of godhead, that God takes it for his very title in above fifty places of the old testament. It is expressed in the *hebrew* by the word שׁדַּדַּי *Shaddai*, and in several places of the book of the *Revelation* by παντοκράτωρ *Pantocrator* in the *greek*. Now our Lord *Jesus Christ* is this almighty wheresoever he appeared to the patriarchs in a visible form under this name; as to *Abraham*, *Gen.* xvii. 1. to *Jacob*, *Gen.* xxv. 11. *Gen.* xlviii. 3. and perhaps it is he who speaks, *Rev.* i. 8. and the apostle *Paul* tells us, *Phil.* iii. 21. that "he has power to subdue all things to himself."

4. The attribute of "eternity," or without beginning or end, is also a peculiar distinguishing perfection of God, *Psal.* xc. 2. "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God." The eternity of God is also denoted by that title of his, "I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God," *Isai.* xlv. 6. Now our Lord *Jesus Christ* has this same eternity, for he is that God, "whose throne is
for

for ever and ever," *Heb. i. 8.* He is "the alpha and omega, the first and the last," *Rev. i. 11.* and *ii. 8.* And the historical eternity of *Melchisedeck*, whose beginning of days and end of life are not mentioned in history, renders him a proper type of *Christ*, "the Son of God, who has no beginning of days, or end of life," and who must have real and true eternity to answer this type, *Heb. vii. 3.*

5. The last attribute I shall mention, is, "immutability," or unchangeableness. This God assumes to himself as a peculiar glory. See *Mal. iii. 6.* "I am the Lord, I change not." So is *Christ* unchangeable. *Heb. i. 12.* The heavens and earth "shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." *Heb. xiii. 8.* "*Jesus Christ* the same yesterday, to day, and for ever."

IV. Divine works, or operations ascribed to *Christ*.

"The creation of the world" is a work of almighty power, and belongs only to God, *Gen. i. 1.* "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It is ascribed to him in scripture as a distinguishing character of godhead, *Heb. iii. 4.* "He that built all things is God." The Lord himself maintains this as his own prerogative, *Isai. xlv. 24.* "I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;" yet this almighty work is attributed to *Christ*, *John i. 1, 3.* "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made that was made;" and verse 10. "The world was made by him." *Psal. cii. 25, 26, 27.* "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: They shall perish, but thou shalt endure, &c. All which three verses are spoken concerning *Christ*, as appears in *Heb. i. 10,* &c. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, &c."

And here it is proper to take notice of four things.

1. That the way whereby God creates all things, is by his word, to shew with what ease almighty power performs so divine a work, *Gen. i. 3.* "And God said, let there be light, and there was light." *Psal. xxxiii. 9.* "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." And *Heb. xi. 3.* "The worlds were framed by the word of God." And it is in the same manner that our Lord *Jesus Christ* is said to "uphold all things, viz. by the word of his power," *Heb. i. 3.* which signifies his mighty, or rather almighty word*.

2. It may further be observed, that as God is the first cause of all created beings, so he is the last end of all. All things were made for him, as well as by him; *Rev. iv. 11.* "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." *Heb. ii. 10.* "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," which is a description of God. Even so all things were created for *Christ*, as well as by him. See *Col. i. 16, 17.* "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.

* Here it may be noted, that it is not the word *Λόγος, logos*, that is used either in the *Heb. i. 3.* or in *Heb. xi. 3.* which is generally chosen when the Father is represented as acting by his Son or the personal word: But the word *Ρήμα, rēma*, is used in both these places, to shew that the Son of God upholds the creation by a mere word of command, acting in the same easy, and almighty, and divine manner as the Father.

him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist," or are conserved in their being and appointed station and order.

3. I remark yet further under this head, that creation is such a peculiar work of God, that his existence or being, his very nature, power, and godhead are certainly and infallibly inferred from it, as the apostle *Paul* assures us, *Rom. i. 20.* "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse;" even they who do not glorify that being as God, whom they may easily know by the work of creation. Thence it follows, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* must be the true God, must have eternal power and godhead, and must be glorified as God, since he created all things: For if any being that had not eternal power and godhead could create a world, then *St. Paul's* argument is feeble, and falls to the ground; then the visible things of the world do not prove the existence of an invisible, eternal and almighty God.

Human reason can find out no higher being than him, by whom all things were created, even that eternal power and godhead, which made all things, and was before all things, even from eternity. Now if *Jesus Christ* be the creator, then he is the highest being that reason can find out, and demands all the honours of true godhead.

4. It may be observed, in the last place, that if our Lord *Jesus Christ* were but a mere man, and not the creator of the heavens and the earth, and yet had the honour and worship of a God given to him, he seems to fall under that sentence of destruction which is pronounced by the true and living God, *Jer. x. 11.* "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." But this leads me to the last distinguishing character of godhead.

V. "Divine worship ascribed to *Christ*."

Religious worship is so peculiar a prerogative of God that he will by no means suffer any meaner being to share in it. He assumes this character to himself with a divine jealousy, lest any thing beneath God should partake of it; *Deut. vi. 13, 14, 15.* "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you, lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth." This charge is repeated again, *Deut. x. 20.* and it is cited by our Lord *Jesus Christ* in these words, *Matth. iv. 10.* "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." The first command doubtless includes this meaning, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," that is, no other objects of worship; and *Exod. xxxiv. 14.* repeats it, "Thou shalt worship no other God; for the Lord whose name is jealous, is a jealous God."

Yet it is abundantly evident, that our Lord *Jesus Christ* is the proper object of worship, both for angels and men, *Heb. i. 6.* "And again, when he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, let all the angels of God worship him." Which is cited from *Psal. xcvii. 7.* "Worship him all ye gods:" Upon which account our Lord *Jesus Christ* may be called the God of gods, as well as the Father, *Deut. x. 17. Psal. cxxxvi. 2.* since angels, which are called gods, must worship him.

him. And let it be noted, that if our translation be right, this is not that worship or honour which is given him as mediator by the Father's appointment, upon the account of his sufferings and death, as it is elsewhere expressed, but upon the account of his original divine nature, and as God now taking flesh: Though it must be confessed the *greek* words rather bear this sense, "When he bringeth again his first begotten into the world," which may refer to his resurrection; yet still it is evident, that angels must worship him.

Our Lord *Jesus Christ* was worshipped as the true God, the Lord *Jehovah*, by the patriarchs, when he appeared unto them in a visible shape under the old testament.

He was worshipped also when he dwelt on earth very often; but I will not cite nor insist on particular instances of this, because some may doubt whether this were not sometimes a mere high degree of reverence and obedience paid to him under the surprising influence of his miracles, which does scarce amount to religious worship, since his godhead was not then so fully discovered to his disciples, as to carry them above all doubt of his messiahship or his deity. But we have plain testimonies of divine worship paid to him after his resurrection; for *Thomas* honoured him as his Lord and his God, *John* xx. 28. He was worshipped by *Stephen* with his dying breath, *Acts* vii. 59. and with him that first martyr entrusted his departing soul. Nor do we ever find the least hint of his dislike or prohibition of worship. Nay, he commends the faith of *Thomas* calling him Lord and God. Whereas good men and angels have ever forbid worship to be paid to them, as being due to God alone. So when *Cornelius* worshipped *Peter*, *Acts* x. 26. "Peter forbid him and said, stand up; I myself also am a man." So when *John* worshipped the angel, *Rev.* xix. 10. and xxii. 8, 9, he refused the worship twice, "and said, see thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant; worship God," that is, God only is the proper object of thy worship.

It may be very properly observed concerning these two texts in the book of *Revelation*, where the angel refuses worship, and directs it to be paid only to God, that this was done after the full glorification of *Christ*, when God had appointed every knee to bow to him, and exalted him in our nature to his full majesty and dominion, and when he was known and adored by the church as the proper object of worship. Now if God only was to be worshipped in that day, it is a plain consequence, that *Christ* is God.

That this worship is due to *Christ*, is further confirmed by the express orders which are given by God himself, both in the old and new testament, for the worship of his Son *Jesus Christ*, *Psal.* xlv. 11. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." *John* v. 23. "That all men should honour the Son, as they honour the Father." And the great and blessed God, who is so jealous of his own prerogative and worship, would never have suffered those practices, much less would he have commanded them, if *Christ* had not been really the true God, and in some way and manner one with himself, and fit to receive the same divine honours.

Objection. Some may be ready to say, this is a sort of lower adoration, a subordinate sort of divine worship, that is paid to *Jesus Christ*, who is called God in scripture; whereas God the Father must have supreme divine worship, and reserves to himself still this supreme and distinguishing prerogative of true godhead.

Answer I. This seems to be but a vain evasion, because the scripture knows no such distinctions of supreme and subordinate divine or religious worship.

It must be granted, as I have hinted before, that the scripture sometimes uses the word worship for other honours than what are divine and religious, as, *1 Chron.* xxix. 20.

"They

“They bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king.” *Math.* xviii. 26. “The servant fell down and worshipped his Lord.” *Rev.* iii. 9. where *Christ* himself says to the church of *Sardis*, “I will make them to come and worship before thy feet:” And perhaps some who knew not that *Christ* was God, might pay this sort of worship to him on earth. Worship, in this sense, signifies only an extraordinary degree of honour paid to any superior person or character, even as we use the word in *english*, when we call several characters, or societies of men, worshipful. But this is not divine or religious worship, such as was appointed to be paid to *Christ* in his exalted state, and was never forbid even in his state of humiliation.

Now in religious and divine worship there is no mention made of two sorts or degrees of it. But if such distinctions were necessary to be observed in our worshipping the Father and the Son, it seems necessary that the scripture should have plainly and expressly told us of it somewhere, lest we run into the danger and hainous guilt of idolatry, by paying the same divine worship to both. There are so many plain expressions that encourage proper divine worship to be paid to *Christ*, and no plain expressions that give us any notion of a meaner or inferior divine worship, that either the scriptures seem defective in a most material point of religion, or *Jesus* must be worshipped with proper divine honours as the Father.

Answer II. “If *Christ* were to be worshipped merely with inferior worship, this would be to set up an inferior god; and thus the christian religion, whose professed design was to abolish polytheism among the nations, and to root out the worship of many gods, some of higher and some of lower rank, even this very christian religion would but more effectually establish it hereby; and the apostles would evidently build up again the things they destroyed. The very applying the name of God so frequently to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and ascribing any thing of divine characters or worship to him, if he be not the true and living God, would seem to be an unpardonable fault and gross absurdity in those men, I mean, the evangelists and the apostles: For they professed to be sent from God to destroy the heathen superstition, which consisted much in the worship of superior and inferior deities, and to turn the gentiles from these vanities to the knowledge and worship of the one true and living God. See *Acts* xiv. 15. *Acts* xvii. 23, 24. *Gal.* iv. 8.

Answer III. It is evident, that when *Christ* appeared to the patriarchs as the Lord *Jehovah*, and assumed the glorious names and titles of God in his converse with them, he was worshipped with supreme honour as the supreme God; for they thought him to be so, according to his own assertions, I am the Lord. They could have no notion of supreme and subordinate worship. Now it is very strange to suppose, what some would persuade us, that after all his services and sufferings he should be rewarded only with subordinate and inferior worship, who had so long before enjoyed the supreme.

The objectors will enquire then, what is that advancement of honour which *Christ* received as the reward of his sufferings? I answer, He was worshipped before God, now as god-man and mediator: Before he might be worshipped as Θεὸς λόγος, God the word, now as God the word in flesh, as God incarnate; that the whole human nature might see and know itself united to the object of divine worship.

How far the blessed soul of our Lord *Jesus* may know and receive it's distinct share of the thanks and praises which ascend from the saints on earth, is a secret not so clearly discovered in scripture: Surely such sacred and inimitable zeal for his Father's glory, such astonishing compassion to lost mankind, such a life and such a death, such a conflict and such a victory, deserve the highest honours and glories that

that we can pay to a creature. And doubtless his exalted human nature receives them from all the blessed spirits above. Glory, and honour, and immortality, were the rewards promised to every son of *Adam* who fulfilled the law of God, *Rom. ii. 7.* and much more are they become due to the second *Adam*, the man *Christ Jesus*, who fulfilled the law in every point, and, by his most illustrious obedience, magnified it, and made it honourable beyond expression.

We may add further also, that since the man *Jesus* hath received so glorious an advancement at the right hand of God, we may reasonably suppose, that his human powers have a vast and extensive cognizance of his churches on earth; and that he partakes of all those circumstances of the honour done to his whole sacred person, which are not purely divine and incommunicable; though we have no warrant to separate and divide the human nature from the divine, in the honours which we pay him.

Still it is the godhead of *Christ* that is the standing and eternal ground of all that divine and religious worship, which we are bound to give him; though we borrow many motives from his life, his love, and his death. And since the great God has so often in his word assumed this sort of worship to himself, as his own prerogative and his distinguishing character, I am persuaded he would never have enjoined nor indulged worship to be paid to *Jesus Christ* in such a manner as is done in scripture, how great soever his services had been to God or man, if he had not the fulness of the godhead dwelling in him bodily.

This shall suffice to answer the objection arising from this distinction of higher and lower worship.

I might now run through the several particular acts of divine worship, which the scripture makes the peculiar rights of God, and yet ascribes them to *Christ*: Such as,

“Believing or trusting in him;” *John xiv. 1.* “Let not your heart be troubled, faith *Christ*; ye believe in God, believe also in me.” *Rom. xv. 12.* “In him shall the gentiles trust.”

“Calling upon him, and praying to him;” *Rom. x. 13.* “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, that is, *Christ*, shall be saved.” *Paul* prayed to him, to take away his thorn in the flesh; *2 Cor. xii. 8.* “For this I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.”

“Adoring and praising him;” *Rev. v. 13.* “And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever.”

“Swearing by his name;” *Rom. ix. 1.* “I say the truth in *Christ*, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the holy Ghost.”

Now all these divine honours done to our Lord *Jesus*, are foretold in the old testament, and required or practised in the new testament, and would be so many affronts to the supreme majesty and dignity of the blessed God the Father, if *Jesus Christ* were not one and the same God with him, as we shall shew in the following propositions.

A variety of other texts might be cited to make good these seventh and eighth propositions; but I chuse rather, in this place, to content myself with citing those which are most unexceptionable, and have no just ground of controversy belonging to them.

To sum up all, let me make this one remark. That the places of scripture which I have brought to shew what are the peculiar and distinguishing characters of godhead, are so plain and easy to be understood, and those scriptures which apply these very same characters to our Lord *Jesus Christ* are so obvious, so evident, so naturally applicable to him, even in the divinest sense of them, that it needs a good deal of skill, and wit, and criticism to divert them to another sense: If it needed but half so much art and critical subtilty to apply those scriptures to *Jesus Christ*, as it does to turn them away from him, one might be tempted indeed to doubt his godhead, or to deny it.

It is plain that the *arian* and *socinian* doctrines, which deny our Lord *Jesus Christ* to be the true and eternal God, cannot be supported in opposition to such obvious evidences of scripture, without more skill and learning, more subtilty and nice arts of distinction to evade the sense of plain words, than the bulk of common christians can ever be furnished with. Day-labourers and tradesmen, children and servants, of the meanest rank, reading their bibles, would naturally be led into the belief of *Christ's* divinity; for they could never find out how to explain away such manifest expressions concerning the godhead of *Christ*, and make them signify a mere creature. Thence I would take leave to infer, that *arian* and *socinian* doctrines are not the doctrines of the bible, which in matters of such moment and consequence are and must be so easy, open and clear, that the ignorant and the unlearned may read and understand; "for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Now the plain christian, who reads his bible honestly, and follows the natural meaning of the words, will be led into the most dangerous mistakes, and to the practice of downright idolatry by the very bible itself, if these divine characters which I have mentioned are not really applicable to *Christ*. If *Christ* were not a partaker of true godhead, I can never imagine that the great God, who is so jealous of his own honour, and so kind and faithful to his people; and who knows how ready mankind is to take every occasion to run into idol-worship, would ever lay such stumbling-blocks or temptations in their way, and leave them in his word for the use of all ages. I cannot persuade myself that this God would have let those passages stand in the holy scriptures as our rule of faith and practice, which have such a natural tendency to diminish his own dignity, to give away his divine prerogatives to another, and to deceive the humble and the simple into such pernicious snares, and that in a point of so high and awful importance.

I proceed now to consider which of the peculiar divine characters are ascribed in scripture to the holy Ghost, and in this part of my discourse I shall be much briefer; not only because the scripture has not occasion to give half so many proofs of the godhead of the holy Spirit, but because if the true and proper godhead of *Christ* be fully proved, that of the holy Spirit will be easily admitted.

"Divine characters ascribed to the holy Spirit."

I. The peculiar name of God, which is ascribed to the holy Spirit in scripture, is *Jehovah*.

The Spirit of God is the same with *Jehovah*; *Isai. vi. 3.* "One of the seraphims cried to another, saying, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, in the original, it is *Jehovah*, the whole earth is full of his glory." And the voice of this *Jehovah* said, verse 9, 10. "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not, &c. Now that these words were spoken by the holy Ghost,

Ghost, is evident from *Acts* xxviii. 25, 26. "Well spake the holy Ghost by *Isaias* the prophet, unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people, and say, hearing ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive," &c. Nor is it any sufficient objection that these words are applied to *Christ*; *John* xii. 41. "These things, said *Isaias*, when he saw his, that is, *Christ*'s, glory, and spake of him." For *Christ* and the holy Ghost are one in godhead, as we shall shew hereafter.

Deut. xxxii. 12. "The Lord, or *Jehovab* alone did lead him," that is, *Israel*, in the wilderness. The prophet *Isaiab* speaking of this matter, ascribes it to the holy Spirit; *Isai.* lxiii. 14. "As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him, that is, *Israel*, to rest; so didst thou lead thy people to make thy name glorious." Now either the Spirit is *Jehovab*, or *Jehovab* alone did not lead them.

Psal. xc. 3. "The Lord, or *Jehovab*, is a great God, and a great king above all gods." Verse 7, &c. "To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, and proved me, and saw my works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation;" which words are cited by *St. Paul*, as spoken by the holy Ghost, *Heb.* iii. 7, 8, 9, &c. "Wherefore, as the holy Ghost saith, to day, if ye will hear his voice, &c. When your fathers tempted me, and I was grieved with that generation." And this is further confirmed, *Isai.* lxiii. 10. "They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit." And *Stephen* reproving the *jews*, *Acts* vii. 51. said, "Ye do always resist the holy Ghost: As your fathers did, so do ye." Nor is it any just objection against this, that they were said to tempt *Christ* in the wilderness, *1 Cor.* x. 9. For in point of godhead *Christ* and the holy Spirit are one.

II. The peculiar titles of God, which seem to be used promiscuously for God the Father, or for the holy Spirit, are these, viz. the God of *Israel*, and the Lord of hosts.

The holy Spirit is represented as one with the "God of *Israel*," *2 Sam.* xxiii. 2, 3. "The Spirit of the Lord, or of *Jehovab*, spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of *Israel* said, the rock of *Israel* spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be just:" Thus the Spirit of the Lord is the same with the God and the rock of *Israel*.

He is also called the "Lord of hosts" in the text before cited, *Isai.* vi. on which I shall not enlarge.

III. The peculiar attributes of God ascribed to the holy Spirit, are, omnipresence and omniscience.

1. "Omnipresence" is attributed to the holy Spirit; *Psal.* cxxxix. 7. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? And whither shall I flee from thy presence?" It is in vain to flee from one who is every where.

John xiv. 16, 17. "The Spirit of truth" is promised to abide with the saints for ever, to be in them, to dwell in them; "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." *Rom.* viii. 11. He dwells in believers according to his promise, and makes them his holy temple. *1 Cor.* vi. 19. And is in all times, and in all places, wheresoever his saints and servants are, distributing his several gifts and graces. *1 Cor.* xii. 11. "All these worketh the self-same Spirit, dividing to every

man severally as he will." Which expression carries as it were a divine sovereignty in it.

2. "Omniscience" belongs also to the holy Spirit; 1 *Cor.* ii. 10. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." It is "the Spirit of *Christ* that was in the prophets which testified a thousand years before-hand the sufferings of *Christ*," 1 *Pet.* i. 11. And this is one peculiar property of godhead, *Isai.* xli. 23. where God challenges all other pretenders to godhead to vie with him. "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." Many minute circumstances of the birth, life and death of *Christ*, as well as his resurrection and the propagation of the gospel, how exactly were they foretold by ancient prophets, and all through the inspiration of this Spirit of prophecy! 2 *Pet.* i. 21. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost."

3. "Eternity" is another attribute of God: And since some properties of God are ascribed to the holy Spirit, eternity must in the same sense belong to him also. Perhaps it is he who is called the eternal Spirit, *Heb.* ix. 14. "The blood of *Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself," &c. Though some persons rather understand this of the eternal godhead of our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself.

But whether it be the one or the other that is there designed, yet I would not build an argument upon the mere doubtful criticism of a *greek* word, and pretend it to be fully convincing, since that learned writer doctor *Waterland* himself, when he is pleading for the eternity of *Christ*, from *Micah* v. 2. "his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," confesses the argument, "is but probable, since there is not ground sufficient for calling it certain and indisputable:" only this he adds by way of remark, "That whosoever should undertake to prove the eternity of God the Father, from any express words, either of the old or new testament, would find his proof liable to the same difficulty, and uncertainty, from the ambiguity of the *hebrew*, or *greek* phrases used to denote eternity."

IV. "Divine works are attributed to the blessed Spirit, as creation of the world, the change of the heart or regeneration, and the raising the dead."

1. "The work of creation," which has been proved before to be a divine work, is attributed to him. *Job.* xxvi. 13. "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens;" *Job.* xxxiii. 4. "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the almighty has given me life." *Psal.* xxxiii. 6. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made: and all the hosts of them by the breath, or Spirit, of his mouth;" for it is the same word רוח "ruach, which is translated "Spirit" in the two foregoing texts, is rendered breath in this.

Acts iv. 24, 45. "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant *David* said, why did the heathens rage?" &c. He who spake by the mouth of *David*, is here declared to be that God who is the creator of all things; but the holy Ghost is he who spake by the mouth of *David*, as appears from his own witness in 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 2, 3. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me," &c. Nor only does *David* the prophet thus witness concerning himself, but the apostle *Peter* does the same; *Acts* i. 16. "The holy Ghost, by the mouth of *David*, spake concerning *Judas*," &c. Therefore the holy Ghost is the creator of all things.

2. The work of "changing the heart," and of new creation, belongs to the great God; *Prov.* xxi. 1. "The heart even of kings is in the hand of the Lord; it is he that turneth them whithersoever he will." And when the heart is turned from sin to

God,

God, it is said to be his workmanship, *Epb.* ii. 10. By him we "are created unto good works." And *Jude* verse 1, "we are said to be sanctified by God the Father. God assumes this prerogative to himself, *Lev.* xx. 8. "I am the Lord which sanctifieth you." Yet this very work of new creation or sanctification is frequently in scripture ascribed to the holy Spirit; *Rom.* xv. 16. "The gentiles are sanctified by the holy Ghost." And we are "chosen to salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit," *2 Thess.* ii. 13. *1 Pet.* i. 2. Upon this account it is, that the saints who are described as "born of God," *John* i. 13. and *1 John* v. 1, 3. are said to be born of the Spirit, *John* iii. 5, 6, 8.

3. The work of "raising the dead" is a divine work, which is also ascribed to the holy Spirit. That it is a work which seems to be appropriated to godhead, *St. Paul* intimates, *Rom.* iv. 17. "He who quickens the dead, and calls the things which are not as though they were:" is a description of God. And God is described in the same manner, *Rom.* viii. 11. "He that raised up *Christ* from the dead." And that this was a glorious instance of his divine power, see *Epb.* i. 19, 20. Now this work, both of raising *Christ* and all the saints from the dead, is ascribed to the holy Spirit; *1 Pet.* iii. 18. "*Christ*— being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." *Rom.* viii. 11. "He that raised up *Christ* from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies; by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

I am come now to the last distinguishing character of godhead, and that is, to be the object of religious worship.

V. "Divine worship is paid to the holy Spirit."

"Baptism is a sacred ceremony, whereby we are devoted and given up to God the Father, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*. But the holy Spirit is not omitted in this piece of worship, *Matth.* xxviii. 19. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost." So that we are dedicated to the holy Ghost in this solemnity, even as we are to God the Father.

Here we may make this just remark, viz. That it can hardly be supposed, that *Christ* should appoint this solemn entrance into christianity, by baptizing men in the name of the one God and two mere creatures; but since they are joined, we may much rather conclude, that *Christ* himself, together with the holy Ghost, are partakers of true deity, as well as the Father; otherwise, as a late writer says, the office of baptism would be an invincible stumbling-block both to *jews* and gentiles.

The *jews* could not bear the least appearance of idolatry after they had smarted so severely for it under the *babylonish* captivity, and would never afterward suffer any to be joined with the true God in their worship. Thus *St. Paul* testifies concerning them, that "they abhorred idols," *Rom.* ii. 22.

And as for the gentiles, it was the main design of christianity to root out idolatry from among them, "to turn them from idols to the living God," *1 Thess.* i. 9.

Now if the Son and holy Ghost were inferior to the Father, and not the same God, the joining them with the Father in this initiating ordinance, would seem to have a very broad appearance of idolatry: And thus the *jews* would have been effectually prejudiced against the gospel; and the gentiles would have been rather confirmed in the worship of idols, or that which is not God.

Another thing wherein religious worship seems to be paid to the holy Spirit, is this, viz. that the apostle prays for the blessing to descend from the holy Spirit on the *Corinthians*, in the same way and manner in which the blessing of the Father and Son are prayed for; *2 Cor.* xiii. 14. "The grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost, be with you all." If this be a petition

tion or prayer, it is a prayer to the sacred three. And the holy Ghost is the object of this worship as well as the Father or Son.

It seems evident also, that the holy Spirit was worshipped in some of those texts which were cited from the old testament, to prove the divine names, titles and attributes to belong to him, as *Ijai. vi. Psal. xcvi. &c.* which I shall not repeat.

And since it is he who enlightens, who comforts, who regenerates, and sanctifies men, who bestows on the saints so many gifts and graces, distributing them severally as he will, since he knows the hearts of men, and changes and renews their hearts unto holiness, the very reason of things leads us to adore him, and gives sufficient foundation to pray to him for what gifts or graces we want, and to praise and give him thanks for what we have received, as shall be shewn hereafter.

I might take notice here, that several of these same divine characters are ascribed also to *Jesus Christ*, as the sanctification of sinners, the raising of the dead, &c. but the proofs of the divinity of *Christ* are sufficient and abundant without these helps.

Thus I have finished the eighth proposition, and shewn that these very names, titles, attributes, works and worship, which are peculiar to God, and incommunicable to another, are ascribed to three by God himself, in his word, which three are distinguished by the names of Father, Son and Spirit.

After all, suppose a man should object thus, You have pretended to prove the deity of the Son and Spirit, by the ascription of such properties, works and worship to them, as belong only to the true God: But how do you know that all these can never belong to any creature? As for instance, cannot God communicate to any inferior being a sort of omnipotency, and vest him with almighty power? Or omniscience, and give him universal knowledge? Or immutability, and make him unchangeable? Is it an impossible thing that any being inferior to the great God, should be capable of forming several parts of the creation? Of changing the hearts of men? Of raising the dead? And is there no sort of religious worship, thanksgiving, and praise, which can be given to any creature, upon the account of some extraordinary and spiritual benefits, received, or to be received from him? And if so, then the ascription of these things to the Son and Spirit, are not sufficient and certain proofs, that true and proper godhead is ascribed to them. I answer,

Answer. It is not within our present reach, nor does it necessarily concern us, to know how far the powers of a creature can go, how glorious, and powerful, and perfect a creature God can make, or how sublime worship or honours, he might have fitted a creature to receive: It is not for us to say, that in the nature of things, it is utterly impossible for any being beneath a God, to have any one of these powers or characters communicated to him: Yet we dare affirm this, that since God has assumed these properties, these works, this worship, and peculiarized them to himself in his word, and since he describes himself by these characters, to distinguish himself from all inferior beings, he would never suffer any mere creature to stand upon record in his word, with these powers, properties, and characters belonging to him; for this would be to give away his own distinguishing titles and properties. This would be to run counter to that holy jealousy, which he professes for his own name, and to bring perpetual confusion into all parts of religion, as I have shewn in the foregoing propositions.

PRO-

P R O P O S I T I O N IX.

There are also some other circumstantial but convincing evidences, that the Son and the Spirit have the true and proper godhead ascribed to them, as well as the Father.

THERE are many things spoken concerning God, the true and the living God, in some parts of his word, which in other parts of it are ascribed to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, or to the blessed Spirit.

First, to our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

1. The final judgment of the world is ascribed to God. *Psal.* l. 6. "For God is judge himself." *Rom.* iii. 6. "Then how shall God judge the world?" And it is ascribed also to our Lord *Jesus Christ*. *Rom.* xiv. 10. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of *Christ*." *2 Tim.* iv. 1. "Our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing." And indeed how can we suppose a being, who has not divine perfections, capable of such a work? It seems to require an omniscient mind, and an almighty arm, to manifest the secrets of all hearts, and to discover and punish the infinite variety of secret wickednesses in the hearts of men, as well as proclaim and reward the secret workings of piety, in those that have loved God.

2. There is a glorious description of the triumph of God, *Psal.* lxxviii. 4, 8, 17, 18. "He rides upon the heavens by his name, *Jah*: The earth shook, the heavens dropped, at the presence of God, the God of *Israel*. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: The Lord is among them as in *Sinai*, in the holy place: Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men;" which is applied to the ascension of *Christ* into heaven. *Eph.* iv. 8, 10. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. He that descended, is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." *Christ* is therefore this Lord, this God, this *Jehovah* or *Jah*, whose triumph is there described.

3. The children of *Israel*, as it is related in *Psal.* lxxviii. 56. "tempted and provoked the most high God;" which is asserted concerning *Christ*, *1 Cor.* x. 9. "Neither let us tempt *Christ*, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed," &c. Therefore the tempting of *Christ* is a tempting of the most high God.

4. The kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom, *Psal.* cxlv. 13. "and his dominion endures through all generations." Which honour is ascribed to *Christ* in a citation of the xlv, *Psalms*, by *St. Paul*, *Heb.* i. 8. "But unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." And in many other places.

5. *Isaiab* prophesies chapter vii. 14. "A virgin shall bear a Son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*." Which is cited by *Matth.* i. 23. and his name is interpreted God with us: And this is abundantly confirmed, *John* i. 11, 14, "The Word, who was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us." *2 Tim.* iii. 16. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh."

6. *John* the baptist was foretold to prepare the way for *Christ*, who is called God, and *Jehovah*, by the prophet. *Isai.* xl. 3. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, [*Jehovah*] make straight in the desert a high way for our God." Which is cited and applied to *John* as the fore-runner of *Christ*, by *St. Matth.* iii. 3. "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet

Isaiab,

Ijaiab, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths strait."

And here it may be observed, that the title "Lord God, which answers to *Jehovah Elohim*, an incommunicable name of God, is given to *Christ*, when *John* the baptist is described as his fore-runner, *Luke* i. 16, 17. "And many of the children of *Israel* shall be turn to the Lord their God; and he shall go before HIM in the Spirit and power of *Elias*." The word HIM, that is, *Christ*, is immediately connected with the Lord their God in the foregoing verse; so that *Christ* is the Lord our God. See more under the 13th and 17th particulars.

7. God's universal propriety in all things, and his dominion over all things, are asserted in many scriptures, *Psal.* ciii. 19. "His kingdom ruleth over all." And yet *Christ* says to the Father, even before his death and resurrection, *John* xvii. 10. "All things that are mine, are thine, and all things that are thine, are mine. *John* xvi. 15. "All things that the Father hath are mine." And as *Christ* is called Lord over all," *Rom.* x. 12. so we find in *Acts* x. 36. "*Christ* is Lord of all.

8. The prerogative to forgive sins is assumed by God himself, as a divine character, *Isai.* xliii. 25. "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins." Yet *Mark* ii. 5. "*Christ* speaks to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," *Acts* vii. 60. *Stephen* prays to *Christ*, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." And the apostle *Paul* exhorts the christians, *Col.* iii. 13. "Even as *Christ* forgave you, so also do ye."

9. The reverence and subjection, which the great God demands for himself, by the prophet *Ijaiab*, is attributed to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, by the apostle *Paul* in his epistle to the *Romans*. Compare *Isai.* xlv. 23. with *Rom.* xiv. 10, 11. The words of the prophet are, "I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." And the apostle says, "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of *Christ*. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

10. The blessed God excludes every thing from comparison or competition with himself," *Isai.* xlv. 5. "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?" Yet our Lord *Jesus Christ* says concerning himself, *John* xiv. 9. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;" and the apostle *Paul* adds, *Heb.* i. 3. "He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" and *Philip.* ii. 6. "He thought it no robbery to be equal with God;" though it must be confessed, that the criticisms which attend this last named text, take off something from it's force and evidence, and render the sense of it a little dubious.

11. *Christ* is that glorious person, "in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily." *Col.* ii. 9. which is too exalted an expression to be given to a mere creature, if the godhead or divine nature were not so united to the man *Christ Jesus*, as to render him one complex person, God and man.

It is true, that the apostle prays for the *Ephesians*, that they "may be filled with all the fulness of God," *Eph.* iii. 19. But this can mean no more than a fulness of those gifts, graces, and manifestations of God, which the primitive christians enjoyed and hoped for. But the word godhead is never used to signify gifts and graces, but only the divine nature, which in it's perfection and fulness, dwelt in this peculiar and transcendent manner in *Christ* alone, and not in his saints. And the addition of

of the word, bodily, seems to shew a peculiar union of the godhead to the human nature or body, of our Lord *Jesus Christ*.

12. Our faith and trust in *Christ*, is the same with faith and trust in God, as appears, *Jer.* xvii. 5, 7. "Curst be the man that trusteth in man; blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Compared with *Psal.* ii. 12. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him," that is, *Christ*.

13. *Christ* is the Lord our God, by whom we are saved, *Hos.* i. 7. "The Lord said, "I will have mercy on the house of *Judab*, and will save them by the Lord, [*Jehovah* ;] their God," compared with *Luke* ii. 11. "Unto you is born in the city of *David* a Saviour, which is *Christ*, the Lord." God the Father who is *Jehovah*, saves his church by his Son, who is also *Jehovah* and their God.

14. That glorious person who is called "the Spirit of God," *Rom.* viii. 9. and in many other places of scripture, is also called "the Spirit of *Christ*," in that very same verse, as well as *1 Pet.* i. 11. "and the Spirit of his Son," *Gal.* iv. 6. and as he is promised to be "poured out on all flesh," by the Lord our God, *Joel* ii. 27, 28. this was accomplished, *Acts* ii. 16. when *Christ* "shed forth this Spirit," verse 33. and baptized the disciples "with the holy Ghost, and with fire," as *Matth.* iii. 11. Thence it appears, that *Christ* is that God to whom the Spirit belongs, and he sends it.

15. *Christ's* own resurrection is attributed to God the Father, *Rom.* vi. 4. and to the holy Spirit, *1 Pet.* iii. 18. and yet *Christ* ascribed it to himself, *John* ii. 19, 21. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up, which he spake of the temple of his body;" this shews, that the same divine power and godhead of the Father, which raised up *Christ*, dwelt also in the Son and Spirit.

16. That it was our Lord *Jesus Christ* who died for us, is abundantly manifest from all the new testament; and yet *Acts* xx. 28. it is said, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." And *1 John* iii. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." So that he who shed his blood, and laid down his life for sinners, was the true God: He came into the world, and was born of a virgin, and took upon him the name of *Emmanuel*, or God with us, God in our nature, that he might have flesh and blood, which he gave for the redemption of his people. See more under the last particular.

17. After the resurrection of *Christ*, the apostle *Thomas*, in a rapture of faith, calls him, "my Lord, and my God," *John* xx. 28. And our Saviour is so far from reproving him, that he commends him, and pronounces those blessed, who should believe the same doctrine, which he professed, without having the same sensible advantages. Now where the words Lord God are thus joined, it looks so like the incommunicable title of God, by which he is often described in the old testament, that *Christ* would never have suffered these words of *Thomas* to pass without a reproof, if he himself had not a real oneness with the great God, and a right to this incommunicable title.

By a comparison of this with what has been said before concerning the visible appearances of God of old, we may grow bold and say, "Surely this was the Lord God, whose voice *Adam* heard in the garden," *Gen.* iii. 8. This was the "Lord God of *Abraham*," *Gen.* xxviii. 13. "The Lord God of your fathers in the burning bush," *Exod.* iii. 15, &c.

18. Whereas it is said, *Rev.* xxii. 6. "The Lord God of the holy prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." It is

added, verse 16. "I *Jesus* have sent my angel, to testify to you these things in the churches." Whence we may reasonably suppose, that our Lord *Jesus*, and the Lord God of the prophets, have such an intimate relation to, and union with one another, that these two names may be used without danger, the one for the other. For *Christ* is the Lord God of the prophets, as well as the Lord God of *Abraham*.

19. There are many other titles and characters, attributed to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and that so often, and in such a manner, as seems to raise him high above the character of creatures, so that I can hardly think these titles would have been thus attributed to him in scripture, if he had not godhead in him, even though he had been never so glorious, and exalted a creature.

He is called the "truth," *John* xiv. 6. The "amen, the faithful and the true witness," *Rev.* iii. 14. which seems to be the name given to God himself, by *Isai.* lxxv. 16. where prophesying of the times of the gospel, he says, that men shall "bless themselves in the God, "amen," and shall swear by the God, "amen," which we translate the God of truth." It is in this "amen," in whom the nations of the earth should be blessed, and by whose name they should swear, in the days of christianity, when "the new heavens and earth are created," verse 17.

Christ is called the "light," absolutely, and without limitation, *John* i. 4. Now light in such an absolute way of expression, is one of the titles of God, 1 *John* i. 5. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

He is called the "life," 1 *John* i. 2. "Truth and life," *John* xiv. 6. "The resurrection and the life," *John* xi. 25. and the "word of life," 1 *John* i. 1. "Eternal life," verse 2. and chapter v. 20. Now the living God that has life in himself, and gives life to all things, is a glorious title and character of God, in many places of scripture. But this seems to be too nearly imitated in these titles given to *Christ*, if he were not God.

Christ is called the "word," "who was with God, and who was God," *John* i. 1. He was in so close a union with the true God the Father, and so much one with him, that he may justly be called the true God; and especially when there is one of the characters of true godhead immediately subjoined, viz. that "all things were made by him," verse 3.

The "word" is a frequent name of *Christ* in the new testament, especially in the writings of the apostle *John*: And some critics well skilled in *jewish* and *hebrew* language, have given us a number of instances, where *Christ* is called the word of God, and word of the Lord, in the old testament also. He is called the "living word," *Heb.* iv. 12, 13. as it should be rendered. "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Which text carries something too sublime in it for any mere creature; and yet christian writers have generally explained this text, concerning our Lord *Jesus Christ*; who is the living word of God, speaking to men, in, and by the word of his gospel.

Now I will easily grant, that any one of these terms, truth, light, life, the word, &c. if upon some particular occasion only, it had been applied to *Christ*, would not have been sufficient to prove him to be true God: Yet when all these are applied to *Christ*, and that in such a manner, or sometimes with such epithets and adjuncts, and in several places of scripture, it seems to raise our thoughts of *Christ* necessarily above

all

all created beings, and leads us to ascribe true godhead to him: And especially when these scriptures are considered, under the light and influence of many other texts, which have been cited before, where true and eternal godhead is without all doubt attributed to him.

20. I close all these circumstantial evidences, with that common argument, which is found in the lips of almost all christians, to prove the divinity of *Christ*, viz. that nothing less than the blood of him that was true God, could make satisfaction to divine justice, equal to the offences that were given it by our sins. The argument seems thus far, at least, to have a convincing force in it. It is said, that, "without blood there is no remission," *Heb. ix. 22.* and it is said also, that "it was not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin." *Heb. viii. 3.* Now I cannot see any certain reason, why God might not have appointed the blood of bulls and goats, to be a sufficient atonement for our sins; or why it was impossible that it should be sufficient, but upon this account only, because it was not an equivalent. For if the justice of God would have been satisfied with any thing less than an equivalent, how can it be said, that it was not possible for the blood of animals to have been appointed for that end, by the sovereign will of God?

But if the governing justice of God insisted upon an equivalent sacrifice, or a satisfaction equal to all the infinite offences of the millions of mankind that are redeemed, then they who deny the godhead of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, are obliged to shew where this equivalent is to be found. I must declare my opinion, that it is the dignity of the man *Christ Jesus*, as he is united to God, and one with God, that entered into the merit of all his sufferings, and made the price of our redemption an abundant satisfaction for sin, and a glorious equivalent for all the sinners that were redeemed, because they were the sufferings of him who was God.

These are some circumstantial evidences, which shew, that true and proper godhead is ascribed to our Lord *Jesus* in scripture.

I proceed therefore,

Secondly, To produce the same sort of evidences, concerning the divinity of the holy Ghost.

1. The inspiration of the prophets, and other holy writers, is attributed to God, *Heb. i. 1.* "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers, by the prophets," &c. And *2 Tim. iii. 16.* "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." But this very work of inspiration is frequently ascribed to the holy Spirit, *2 Sam. xxiii. 2.* "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me." *Ezek. xi. 5.* "The Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, speak," &c. *2 Pet. i. 21.* "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost." Therefore the holy Ghost is God.

2. The body of *Christ* is said to be conceived in the virgin *Mary*, by the operation "of the holy Ghost," *Mat. i. 20.* and by the over-shadowing power of the highest," *Luke i. 35.* that is, the holy Spirit by whom divine power is exerted; and yet for this very reason *Christ* is called the Son of God, because he was conceived by the influence of the holy Ghost; which would hardly have been expressed in that manner, if the holy Ghost had not been God.

3. Lying to the holy Ghost, is lying to God, *Acts v. 3, 4.* "Why hath *Satan* filled thy heart, to lie to the holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The holy Spirit seems to be called God in this text.

4. That God who dwells in us as his temple, is the holy Spirit, *2 Cor. vi. 16.* "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them."

M m m 2

Compared

Compared with 1 Cor. vi. 19. "Know you not, that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you." Now for what reason can any thing be called the temple of God, in God's own word, but because God himself dwells in it?

5. To which I might subjoin in the last place, that blasphemy against the holy Ghost has a greater penalty annexed to it under the gospel, than blaspheming against God or *Christ*. See *Matth.* xii. 31, 32. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: But whosoever speaketh against the holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in that which is to come." Now it is not to be supposed, that if the holy Ghost were but a mere creature, the sin of blasphemy committed against him, should have a more express and dreadful threatening of utter destruction pronounced against it, than blasphemy against God the Father, or against his Son, who is his express image.

I grant, that the most obvious and direct sense of that threatening, is to denounce damnation, without hope, upon those who shall wilfully and utterly reject the last and fullest demonstrations of the *Messiah*, and the brightest evidence of the gospel, by resisting the convictions of the holy Ghost, in all his miraculous operations. Yet I think it may be worth our enquiry, whether this solemn and awful denunciation of judgment, against those obstinate resisters of the gospel, and blasphemers of the holy Ghost, might not be written in such express and dreadful language to stand as a sacred fence and guard, against any attempts to diminish his divine dignity.

Thus I have fulfilled the proposal in the ninth proposition, and shewn a variety of other evidences of the deity of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.

I will not pretend, that every text which I have here cited, is so plainly or necessarily determined, to the sense in which I have cited it, as to be free from all objections: Though the greatest part of them cannot reasonably be construed to any other sense, without an unnatural strain and force put upon them, to make them serve some *arian* or *socinian* scheme. And there is just reason to believe, that the all-wise God would never have expressed himself in these scriptures, in such a manner, and used the names of God, **Lord*, *Jehovah*, so promiscuously in speaking of *Christ*, and of the holy Spirit, and that without any guard, any exception or limitation, if there had been any error or danger in believing *Christ* or the Spirit, to have proper godhead in them.

I do not pretend to instruct the learned world; my design here was to write for private and unlearned christians, and to lead them by the fairest and most obvious sense of scripture, into some acquaintance with the great doctrine of the trinity. And it is my settled opinion, that a christian can never safely build his faith, in any important article of religion, upon such scriptures as want a great deal of art, and labour, and critical skill, to make them speak that article plainly.

Yet because the adversaries of our faith, have endeavoured to pervert the natural sense of many a text, those who have a mind to see how the sense of several of these scriptures is confirmed, by just criticism and reasoning, in opposition to the cavils and objections of men, may consult such authors, as have written largely on this subject, as bishop *Pearson*, doctor *Barrow*, bishop *Bull*, doctor *Owen*, &c. in the last age, and more lately Mr. *Boyse*, and doctor *Waterland*, in their treatises of the divinity of *Christ*, doctor *Waterland*'s sermons on that subject, Mr. *Samuel Maiber* in his two discourses on the trinity, and the godhead of the holy Ghost, Mr. *Guyse*'s

two

* See the two last paragraphs, under proposition II. page 425.

two volumes of sermons on the deity of *Christ*, and the holy Spirit, and doctor *Knicht's* sermons on that subject, with several others.

I would remark yet further, that though several of these scriptures taken singly and alone, will not certainly prove that the peculiar divine characters are ascribed to the Son and the Spirit, because some of them may be otherwise construed; yet when they stand in such a light as I have set them in, and run parallel to, and are connected with so great a number of other scriptures, that certainly ascribe godhead to the Son and Spirit; I think, the most, if not all, of these may serve to brighten the evidence, and enforce the conviction.

P R O P O S I T I O N X.

Thence it necessarily follows that these three, viz. the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, have such an intimate and real communion in that one godhead, as is sufficient to justify the ascription of those peculiar and distinguishing divine characters to them.

IT was the great design of God to discover his nature and his will, and to make himself known to the children of men, by all his revelations to mankind: And when he employed holy men to write his word, it was to preserve these divine discoveries of himself uncorrupted, and to deliver them down to all ages, that he might be known and worshipped according to those revelations of himself, which he hath made. It is only by these divine and distinguishing characters which he has assumed, and peculiarized to himself in his word, that we know what and who God is: Now we can never imagine, that a God who is so jealous of his own honour, and so kind and faithful to his creatures, should ever suffer such peculiar and distinguishing characters of godhead, to be ascribed in such a multitude of places of his own word to any thing that is not God, lest he thereby give away all that honour and glory, which it is the very design of his word to appropriate and reserve to himself, and lest he should lead his own people into a dangerous error.

Though I have mentioned this once or twice before, yet my reader will forgive me that I repeat it again, because I would have him always keep it in his eye, and have it deeply impressed upon his mind, as an argument, in my esteem, of resistless evidence, and uncontrollable force.

The Son and the Spirit, who have these peculiar divine characters ascribed to them, must therefore have some real and proper communion in the divine nature, some participation or share in the true and eternal godhead: Otherwise the word of God, which was written for our instruction, would be more ready to deceive us than to lead us into truth, and would thereby impeach both the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Let me make in this place two remarks.

Remark I. If any of my readers should think they can refute above twenty of the arguments that I have used to prove the godhead of *Christ*, and the holy Spirit, by giving those scriptures another turn of sense; yet let them remember that they cannot go fairly into a denial of their godhead, till they have refuted them all, which I am fully persuaded they will never be able to do.

Remark II. I think I ought here to mention again that which was hinted before, viz. That though the ascriptions of deity to the blessed Spirit are not written in scripture with half so much frequency or evidence, as those ascriptions of deity to the Son of God: Yet if the deity of the Son be well confirmed, that of the holy Spirit will

will be readily granted by all. Every proof therefore of the godhead of *Christ* may be counted a consequential scripture proof of the godhead of the holy Ghost.

A moral ARGUMENT.

Before I dismiss this proposition, I would ask leave to add one moral argument, to prove that the Son and holy Spirit have real communion in the divine nature, as well as the Father.

The greatest number of christians since the days of the apostles, the most religious, the most holy of men, and multitudes of glorious confessors and martyrs, have believed this doctrine of the divinity of the Son and Spirit, and under the influence of this belief have paid divine honours to them both: And this many of them have done with such concurring circumstances, that carry in them a good force of argument, viz they have worshipped them as God. 1. After they have sought the knowledge of the truth with utmost diligence and prayer. 2. When they have been in the holiest and most heavenly frames of spirit, and in their devoutest hours. 3. When they have been under the most sensible impressions of the love of the Father, and the Son, and under the most quickening influences of the blessed Spirit himself. 4. In the devotions of a death bed, and in the songs and doxologies of martyrdom.

Now can we suppose that, in such devout and glorious seasons as these are, God the Father should ever thus manifest his own love to souls that are degrading him by worshipping another god? That *Christ Jesus* should reveal himself in his dying love to souls that are practising idolatry, and worshipping himself, instead of the true God? Or can we believe that the blessed Spirit should give his influences, and his consolations, to encourage and assist such false worship, and himself assume these divine honours, if he had no title to godhead? Or can we imagine that the true and gracious God, should suffer such multitudes of holy souls to be deluded and given up, to believe a lie in such an awful and important point, in their most devout moments, and in their dying hour?

P R O P O S I T I O N XI.

Since there is and can be but one true God, these three, who have such a communion in godhead, may properly be called the one God, or the only true God.

THE reason of it is this. Because, if God "will not give his glory, and his name to any other," as we have before proved, *Isai.* xlii. 8. then those to whom he has given his name and his glory, are not another, but they are one and the same with himself. There is a sameness of godhead, therefore, that belongs to these three, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: So that the Son and the Spirit cannot be called another god, or gods; for if they could, this would support, and not destroy, the polytheism, or multiplicity of gods, which was acknowledged and believed by the heathen nations.

And perhaps it is better to express this by a sameness of godhead, than by calling it an equality; for equality is more properly found between several distinct beings: Now wherein soever these three are distinct, it may admit of some doubt and argument, whether they are equal or no.

Therefore

Therefore we cannot fall into any mistake of doctrine, when we read in scripture, that the Father, the Son, and Spirit are one, if we suppose it to signify, or at least to include, they are one in divine nature, or godhead; they are properly one and the same God; as when *Christ* expresses himself thus: *John* x. 30. "I and my Father are one;" and when the apostle *John*, speaking of the holy trinity, saith, *1 John* v. 7. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost: And these three are one."

Whatsoever other sense may possibly be put on the first of these texts, "I and my Father are one," since *Christ* had not in that day so fully revealed his own godhead; yet it is evident, that this last expression of the three that bear record in heaven, cannot signify these three are one in their testimony; or, one in design and agreement, as some would have it: Because when the apostle, in the following verse, speaks of the agreement of the three witnesses on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; he asserts expressly these three, *εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσι* agree in one thing. But in this verse he says concerning the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, they are one, *ἓν εἶσι*, which must mean that the three witnesses in heaven have some superior, and more intimate union or oneness, than the three witnesses on earth pretended to: And what can this more justly be applied to, than a oneness in the divine nature?

This last text hath been the subject of many cavils and disputes, whether it were written originally by the apostle, or whether it were not foisted into the scripture in some later ages; but upon the best examination we can make, I think there are good reasons to approve it apostolical.

Now since there is but one only true and living God, these three, or each of them, may be called the only true and living God: And wheresoever any such expression is found in scripture, attributing the only true godhead to one of these, it is not to be supposed that it excludes the other two from communion in the only true godhead; but rather to shew that there is no other true godhead, but what belongs to these.

In this sense we must understand the following texts, where the one God is mentioned, if we would interpret them in a consistency with those numerous scriptures before cited, where the one true godhead is attributed to the Son and holy Spirit. *Matth.* xix. 17. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." *Mark* xii. 32. "There is one God, and there is none other but he;" and many other places.

There are some texts wherein the Father is represented as the only true God. *John* xvii. 3. "That they might know thee, the only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom thou hast sent." *Rom.* xvi. 7. "To God only wise, or, to the only wise God be glory, through *Jesus Christ* for ever." *1 Cor.* viii. 6. "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him." *Eph.* iv. 4, 5, 6. "There is one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all, who is above all."

There are also some texts, wherein our Lord *Jesus Christ* may seem to be represented as the only true God. *Isai.* xlv. 21, 22. "There is no God else besides me, a just God, and a Saviour, there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." *Jude* verse 25. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty." And some learned writers suppose, that whole title in the fourth verse of this epistle belongs to *Christ*, where men are said to "deny the only Lord God, and our Lord *Jesus Christ*;" and they translate it thus agreeably enough to the greek, "our only master, God, and Lord, *Jesus Christ*." *Τὸν μόνον Δεσπότην, Θεόν, καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.* Especially when

St. Peter's

St. Peter's second epistle, of which St. Jude's epistle is but a sort of epitome, applies the same word *θεογονος* to Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 1.

Now in any of these scriptures, we are not to imagine that either the Father or the Son are excluded, or shut out from true godhead; but that in some of them the only true godhead is represented in the person of the Father; in the others, the same godhead is represented in the person of the Son, for this only true godhead subsists and acts in three different persons; as we shall see in the following propositions*.

P R O P O S I T I O N XII.

Though the Father, Son and Spirit are but one God, yet there are such different properties, actions, characters, and circumstances ascribed to these three, as are usually ascribed to three distinct persons amongst men.

TO make this proposition evident, I shall do two things. First, I will attempt to prove that they have personal actions and characters ascribed to them in scripture: And then secondly, shew that these actions require distinct persons.

First, "The sacred three have personal actions and characters ascribed to them."

That God the Father is a person all parties easily allow. The actions of creating, and governing all things, purposing ends and using means, and disposing the creatures according to the rules of his wisdom, justice and grace, are abundant evidences of his personality, and the scripture is full of them.

The Son of God, even before he came into this world, did converse with the ancient patriarchs, was sent of God as the angel of his presence, to lead the *Israelites* in the wilderness, to encourage *Joshua* as captain of *Jehovah's* host, and then to take flesh upon him of the virgin *Mary*; all which are personal actions.

The holy Spirit did lead *Israel* through the desert, did inspire the prophets, and speak by them, did guide and influence our Lord *Jesus Christ*, did work miracles by the apostles, &c. And all these are personal actions.

Now lest any opposer should say, "All these several actions are performed by one single person, even the great God himself, under mere different names or appearances, and not by three distinct personal agents, I shall therefore prove,"

In

* Here it may not be amiss to mention that which some divines have laid a great stress upon, to prove the doctrine of the trinity, viz. That God the Father, when he was about to create man, speaks thus; *Gen. i. 26.* "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" consulting, as it were, with the Son and Spirit. This seems very probable: And perhaps it may be upon this account, that the *hebrew* word is used in the plural number in the following texts. *Eccles. xii. 1.* "Remember thy creators in the day of thy youth." *Psal. cxlix. 2.* "Let *Israel* rejoice in his makers." *Job. xxxv. 10.* "None saith, where is God my makers?" *Isai. liv. 5.* "Thy makers is thy husbands." Though other critics conceive these plural words to be mere expressions of eminence concerning God in the *hebrew* language, as *Abraham* is called "masters," and *Pharaoh*, "Lords," *Gen. xxiv. 9.* and *xl. 1.* And as the *hebrew* word for God is *אלהים Elobim*, which signifies Gods, and is used for a false god or an angel, as well as for the true God.

There are also some other expressions in scripture, where the Father, Son and Spirit seem as plainly to be denoted, *Gen. iii. 22.* "The Lord God said, behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." And *Isai. vi. 8.* When the Father, Son and Spirit are represented in vision, the prophet "heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" That is, I as one God, and us as three persons.

Since this was in the press, there has appeared a small discourse called "The trinity of the bible," wherein the argument arising from these *hebrew* plurals, and from the name *Elobim* is shewn in it's fullest force, and pushed to the utmost; and that with great probability, if the author had but answered the objections, he himself has raised in the margin, page 9 and 10. to the fuller satisfaction of his readers.

In the second place, That "actions which require distinct persons, are ascribed to the sacred three in scripture."

Now those are certainly such distinct personal actions and characters, as require three distinct personal agents, which cannot be ascribed or attributed to each other. And there are such different and distinct personal characters and actions ascribed to each of these three in the word of God, as cannot possibly be ascribed to either of the other two. There are such things attributed to the Father, which cannot be attributed to the Son, or the holy Spirit: And again, there are such things attributed to the Son, as cannot belong to the Father, nor the Spirit: And such things are attributed to the Spirit, which cannot be ascribed either to the Father, or the Son: Of which I shall produce a few instances.

The Father is said to generate, or beget the Son. *Psal. ii. 7.* "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Which is applied to *Christ, Heb. i. 5.* and chapter v. 5. Now this paternal act, whatsoever it mean, yet it cannot be attributed either to the Son or the Spirit.

The Son is called the "only begotten of the Father" *John i. 14, 18.* Which filial character cannot be ascribed to the Spirit, or the Father.

The Spirit is said to be given by the Father to the Son, *John iii. 34.* "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." And *Isai. lxi. 1.* "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me;" which is applied to *Christ, Luke iv. 18.* But what is said here of the Spirit, cannot be attributed to the Father, nor the Son.

"The Father sent the Son into the world to take flesh upon him, and to be born, or made of a woman," *John vi. 38, 39, 40, 57. Gal. iv. 4.* But neither the Father, nor the Spirit, are ever said to be sent to take upon them our nature, or the likeness of sinful flesh, as is expressed concerning the Son, *Rom. viii. 3.*

The holy Spirit is said to be sent from the Father, by our Lord *Jesus Christ* unto the disciples, *John xv. 26.* "When the comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father." And *Acts ii. 33.* "The Son having received of the Father the promise of the holy Ghost, he hath shed him forth in his various gifts upon the apostles."

The diversity of characters and offices which are sustained, and fulfilled by the Father, Son and Spirit, in order to the salvation of sinners, are so many distinct personal titles, properties, and actions attributed to them, whereby they are plainly distinguished from one another, as three personal agents.

The Father sustains the character of the supreme Lord, and governor of all things, in the oeconomy of our salvation. He is represented in scripture as maintaining the rights of godhead, and demanding satisfaction for the affronts that are done thereto by our sins: He purposes and appoints the scheme of our salvation in himself, *Eph. i. 9.* He sends his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to make satisfaction to his injured authority, and to the offended dignity of godhead.

The Son took flesh and blood, to do the will of the Father. *Heb. x. 5, 7.* "A body hast thou prepared me: And lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." It is the Son who dies to make atonement for sin, who rises again, and ascends to heaven as our high priest, there to intercede for us; and is exalted by the Father to the kingdom, in order to govern the world and the church.

The holy Spirit, in the sacred oeconomy of our salvation, is sent from the Father by the Son, to lead sinners into the knowledge of the truth, to change their natures,

to sanctify or make them holy, to comfort and conduct them to glory, as well as to work miracles in the world, for the confirmation of this gospel.

Now all these are so many several offices, characters and actions, which cannot be promiscuously applied to one another, in the same manner as they are attributed distinctly to each of the sacred three in scripture; and therefore they must be accounted distinct personal actions, &c.

I know not how it is possible for any one to read these following texts of scripture, wherein all the blessed three are mentioned together, without supposing them to be three distinct personal agents.

Isai. xlii. 1. Where God the Father says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, I will put my Spirit upon him."

Isai. lxi. 1. Where the Son of God in prophecy says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me."

Luke iii. 22. "And the holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove upon him, that is *Christ*, and a voice came from heaven, which said, thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well-pleased." Here are the three persons of the blessed trinity, manifesting themselves in a sensible manner at the baptism of *Christ*. The Son like a man, the holy Spirit as a dove, and the Father speaking from heaven.

Matth. xxviii. 19. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost."

John xiv. 16, 17. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth."

John xiv. 26. "The comforter which is the holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, and he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The little word *he* in the *greek* is *ἐκεῖνος*, which is always used for a person.

John xv. 26. "I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me." Where this personal word *ἐκεῖνος* is again used.

Rom. viii. 11. "The Spirit of him, that is, the Father, who raised up *Jesus* from the dead."

Rom. xv. 30. "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord *Jesus Christ's* sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me, in your prayers to God for me."

2 Cor. xiii. 14. "The grace of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Ghost, be with you all, amen."

Eph. ii. 18. "Through him, that is, *Christ*, we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Ephes. iv. 4, 5, 6. "There is one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all."

1 Pet. i. 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*."

Jude verses 20, 21. "Praying in the holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord *Jesus Christ* unto eternal life."

I think the plain and express scripture contained in these citations, sufficiently distinguishes three personal agents, without any further comment upon them. A *turk*, or an *indian*, that reads them without any prepossession, would certainly understand most of them so.

P R O P O S I T I O N XIII.

Therefore it has been the custom of the christian church in almost all ages, to use the word PERSON, in order to describe these three distinctions of Father, Son, and Spirit; and to call them three distinct persons.

THE word person signifies, in the common language of mankind, one single intelligent voluntary agent, or a principle of action that has understanding and will. So three men, or three angels, are properly called three distinct persons; and the Father, the Son and the Spirit, who are all one God, yet having three such distinct sort of actions and characters attributed to them, as may properly be ascribed to three distinct intelligent agents, we make no scruple to call them three persons. For it is sufficiently evident, that three mere names, three attributes, three modes or manners of being, three relations, or three sorts of conception of one and the same single or undividual being, are not sufficient to sustain the three different offices, or to perform the three different sort of actions, which are attributed to Father, Son, and Spirit: Nor can we account for them, without supposing three distinct intelligent agents.

It might be also mentioned to confirm this proposition, that the scripture itself uses the word person, in one or more places, to distinguish the Father from the Son. *Heb. i. 3.* *Christ* is called "the express image of his Father's person." And though the *greek* word "hypostasis," which we well render person, sometimes signifies substance, as it is translated *Heb. xi. 1.* yet in that very place the word seems to intimate a distinction from the Father, strong enough to answer the word person in our language. Again in *2 Cor. iv. 6.* "The knowledge of the glory of God shines forth in the person of *Jesus Christ*;" which perhaps is a better translation of the *greek* word *πρόσωπον* "prosopon," than when we render it the face of *Christ*.

Though the word person be fitly used and applied in this case, yet we generally suppose it is not to be taken exactly in the same sense, as when we apply the word to three men, or three angels, and call them three distinct persons; for they have not such real communion in one nature, as these three sacred persons have in one godhead.

But since these things are so difficult to determine, I will never contend with my brother, or fellow-christian, who scruples to use the word person in this doctrine; provided he will but allow such a distinction between the sacred three, as is sufficient to support their distinct characters and offices assigned to them in scripture: And this is all that I mean by using this word.

Yet since the word person is the best word that we know, and comes nearest to the ideas or conceptions, which the scripture seems to give us of the distinction between Father, Son, and Spirit; I use it still with great freedom and satisfaction, in a sense near akin to the common sense of the word.

A moral A R G U M E N T.

As I have used one moral argument at the end of the tenth proposition, to prove the true and proper deity of Father, Son, and Spirit; so I shall propose another of

the same kind under this proposition, to confirm both the doctrine of their deity, and distinct personality together : And it is this.

This great article of belief, that "Father, Son, and Spirit are three persons, and yet one God," is so sublime in it's nature, so impossible to be found out by human reason, if it had not been revealed ; it carries in it such an appearance of contradiction at first, it is so exceeding hard to explain and reconcile, even when it is well considered by us ; and it is so shocking and offensive in the most usual explications of it to the great pretenders to reason, that it can hardly be supposed how it should enter into the minds of men at first ; and how it should have been so generally believed in the christian church in almost all ages of christianity, if it had not been very plainly revealed, and strongly confirmed in scripture ; so that those honest and conscientious men could not wink against the light and strength of evidence, nor turn the scripture to any other sense.

It is not to be imagined that such a doctrine of the trinity, which has no countenance from the light of nature, nor any manner of allurements in it to gratify the lusts or fancies of men, nor flatter the pride of human reason, should ever have come, without most forcible evidence, into the heads of such multitudes of great and wise men, who thought and searched with freedom for themselves, and who read the bible with a honest enquiry after truth ; I say, it is not to be imagined that such a strange article should ever have been believed by these men, and brought into the church, or subsisted there so many hundred years, and especially since the reformation, were it not for the plain, strong, over-bearing light, and resistless proofs of it that are found in the word of God. *Several remarks with which the reverend ministers of *London* have prefaced their late "harmony of confessions" on this article, are well worth notice here, see pages 41—47.

P R O P O S I T I O N XIV.

Though the sacred three are evidently and plainly discovered in scripture, to be one and the same God, and three distinct personal agents or persons, yet the scripture bath not in plain and evident language explained, and precisely determined the particular way and manner, how these three persons are one God, or how this one godhead is in three persons.

THE truth of this doctrine, that "there are three divine persons and one God," is abundantly more evident in the scripture, than any particular explication of this sacred doctrine : And though learned men have endeavoured to explain the trinity by reason, to determine the "modus" or manner how three are one, and one three, to defend their schemes by human arguments, and to illustrate them by several similitudes, yet these illustrations, these explainings and reasonings, with the human terms that belong to them, are not to be esteemed, as they have too often been,

* How the particular explications of this doctrine came to be so various, both in the writings of the primitive and modern christians, will be easily accounted for in the following proposition, viz. "because scripture has not clearly explained it." And if the bulk of the christian world, has at any time for some ages together followed one and the same scheme of explication, it is because they found undeniably the plain doctrine of three persons, and one God revealed in scripture, and they knew no other way to give a tolerable explication of it all that time.

been, the matter of divine revelation, any farther than they are by evident and irresistible consequence drawn from the word of God.

Among these explications, some of them seem to me to be evidently false and insufficient.

Such is the *arian* scheme, which supposes the Father only to be the true God, and that the two other persons have not true, proper and eternal godhead belonging to them: And such is the *fabellian* scheme, which supposes the Father, Son, and Spirit, not to be distinct persons, but mere different names, modes, and appearances of the one God. One of these denies the true godhead, the other the personality.

Other schemes have been multiplied in the christian world, which do indeed secure and maintain the substance of the scriptural doctrine of the trinity, as the *athanasian*, the scholastic scheme, &c. Yet they have such various difficulties attending them, that I do not think it necessary to trouble the private christian with a long detail of them here.

And indeed to speak my own sentiment freely, I must say, that upon a fresh and unbiassed search of matters, a mature and deliberate review of the scriptural doctrine of the trinity, as I find it in the bible, and a new survey of the several schemes found out to explain it, I am more firmly established than ever in this doctrine, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are the one true God, yet subsisting in three persons: But as to the various schemes of explication, there is not any of them can prevail upon me any farther now, than to receive them as possible or probable explications of a very deep and difficult doctrine of scripture.

But suppose the professors of any of the best of these schemes, should find sufficient arguments from the word of God, to demonstrate the truth of their own scheme, and could prove it beyond all contradiction, that their particular explication of the trinity, is the very doctrine that is revealed in the holy scripture, yet I am sure they can never prove that it is clearly and plainly revealed there: But it still requires much skill and labour of reasoning to draw it out from scripture, and set it in an evident light.

P R O P O S I T I O N X V .

Thence I infer, that it can never be necessary to salvation, to know the precise way and manner how one godhead subsists in three personal agents, or how these three persons are one God.

THE reasons of this proposition are very evident.

1. Though the doctrine of the trinity seem to be a fundamental article of christianity, yet the particular explication of this sacred doctrine, as we have hinted before, cannot be a fundamental, because "it is not any where revealed to us in scripture, in so plain and manifest language, as the fundamental articles of our religion are and must be:" For the scriptures were written to make the meanest of men wise to salvation; even the babes in *Christ*, and the weak, and the unlearned, the "base and the foolish things of this world, whom God hath chosen and called," *1 Cor. i. 27.* Now that it is not so plainly revealed, appears, because learned and pious men, who have made a honest search after truth, derive their several explications of this doctrine by long and difficult trains of reasoning, and are often ready

to commit mistakes, and to run counter to the most established principles of natural reason, and sometimes contradict themselves too in this work.

I will not deny but there may be several truths both of natural and revealed religion, that are merely drawn by reasoning and consequence, which may yet be necessary to salvation: But then these are such as are open and obvious to the first view of reason, and such as lie very near the surface of scripture, if I may so express it, and may be inferred with the greatest ease by men of the lowest rank of understanding. Such easy and obvious consequences may contain fundamental doctrines. But whatsoever lies hidden deep in the sacred mines of the word of God, and must be digged thence with much learning and study, much toil and labour of reasoning, and can be drawn out only by long chains of laborious argument, these things can never be designed of God for the fundamental articles of our religion, nor ought they to be esteemed or imposed as such by weak and fallible men.

2. A second reason I have to persuade me, that no particular explication of the trinity, and the "modus" of it is necessary and fundamental, is this; that there have been many, and very different explications of this doctrine embraced by some persons of most exemplary piety: Such persons as have most firmly believed the general doctrine itself, and such, concerning whom I could even venture to say, "May my soul be where their's is in the other world!"

Some have asserted one substance, one conscious mind, inconceivably and necessarily distinguished into three personal agents. Others have supposed, three distinct substances or minds, and yet all intimately, and essentially, and necessarily united in one godhead.

Some have maintained the son-ship of *Christ*, and procession of the Spirit, to be essentially and eternally necessary to the divine nature. Others would account for the generation, and procession, and every thing that looks like derivation, some other way, rather than let it belong to godhead.

And yet the writings and conversation of all of them, have been famous for a favour of piety; they have all paid divine honours to Father, Son and Spirit, and lived and died to the glory of God their Saviour: Some of them were certainly mistaken on earth, in their particular explications of this mystery, because they differed so widely; and they were taken to heaven before they could agree in this point of controversy; thence it plainly follows, that an agreement and certainty in this point is not necessary in our way to heaven.

3. Another argument I would use to prove, that the particular explications of this doctrine of the trinity, cannot be necessary to salvation, is this, that the "duties which we are obliged to pay to the Father, Son and Spirit, in order to our own salvation, do not depend upon any particular modes of explication," in what manner they are one, and in what manner they are three; but upon their divine alfsufficiency to fulfil and sustain their several offices and characters, that are attributed to them in the word of God. But this I shall enlarge upon more in some following propositions.

I shall conclude this head, with calling in the testimony of some authors to support this proposition, whose zeal for the sacred doctrine of the trinity, can never be called in question.

The first, is the reverend, learned and pious doctor *Owen*, to whose name and memory I pay as great veneration as to most of the writers of the last age. In his little treatise of the "doctrine of the trinity," third edition, 8vo. page 18. he hath these words. "The sum of this revelation in this matter, is, that God is one; that this one

one God is Father, Son and holy Ghost; that the Father is the Father of the Son; and the Son the Son of the Father; and the holy Ghost the Spirit of the Father, and the Son; and that in respect of this their mutual relation, they are distinct from each other. This is the substance of the doctrine of the trinity, as to the first direct concernment of faith therein." And a little after, "This is the whole of faith's concernment in this matter, as it respects the direct revelation of God made by himself in the scripture, and the first proper general end thereof. Let this be clearly confirmed by direct and positive divine testimonies containing the declaration and revelation of God, concerning himself, and faith is secured as to all it's concerns. For it hath both it's proper formal object, and is sufficiently enabled to be directive of divine worship and obedience. The explication of this doctrine unto edification, suitable unto the revelation mentioned, is of another consideration."

And page 75. when he has finished his proofs of the godhead and personality of the sacred three, he sums up all in these words. Viz. "Our conclusion from the whole is; that there is nothing more fully expressed in the scripture, than this sacred truth is; that there is one God, Father, Son, and holy Ghost; which are divine, distinct, intelligent, voluntary, omnipotent principles of operation, and working, which whosoever thinks himself obliged to believe the scripture, must believe; and concerning others in this discourse, we are not solicitous. This is that which was first proposed; namely, to manifest what is expressly revealed in the scripture, concerning God the Father, Son, and holy Ghost; so as that we may duly believe in him, yield obedience unto him, enjoy communion with him, walk in his love and fear, and so come at length to be blessed with him for evermore. Nor doth faith for it's security, establishment and direction, absolutely stand in need of any farther exposition or explanation of these things."

And after the author has given a brief explication of essence, substance, unity, distinction, personality, &c. in a few pages, he adds page 79. "Nor are those brief explications themselves before-mentioned, so proposed as to be placed immediately in the same rank and order with the original revelations before insisted on, but only are pressed as proper expressions of what is revealed, to increase our light, and further our edification."

The next authors I shall cite on this subject, are the "four *London* ministers, who stated and defended the doctrine of the blessed trinity," in a book lately published by their concurrent labours, and who are persons of undoubted piety and zeal for the christian faith.

In page 18. their words are these. "Section 6. We do not ourselves pretend to say, how these three are distinguished from each other: That we leave to those, who are bold enough to speak, even upon such a point as this, without, if not against what the scriptures themselves any where have said: We only say, that there they are distinguished.

"Section 7. We farther add, that though these three are in the scriptures distinguished from, and therefore not to be confounded with each other; yet we have learned nothing there, either of their being compounded, or divided: Nor do we therefore undertake to shew explicitly, and in particulars, how they are three; nor, how, though three, yet they are one. What we assert again is only, that they are three, some way or other; and though in some respect three, yet but one God.

"Section 8. "Nay, though these three are in the holy scriptures spoken of under the names of Father, Son, and holy Ghost; and as begetting, begotten, and proceeding: Yet still we leave it to those who are wiser, or at least more daring and
bold

bold than we, to say that this does, and to shew afterward how it does relate to the divine essence. * For we have no notion of a greater or lesser in the godhead, do think, that wherever that does belong, it must equally belong: And consequently, that it is not any one of the three, that is, exclusive of the others; but that these three are the one supreme God.

“Section 9. Let it be added, before we produce our proofs, that these three are not merely three names: And that these names do not every where in scripture, if they do any where, bear one and the same meaning.

“Section 10. We shall now only venture to say once more, that whatever the distinction is between these sacred three, or wherein soever it does consist; as on one part it does not destroy the unity of the divine nature, so on the other, it is such, so real and so great, as is just and sufficient ground to support whatever is distinctly said of the one or the other of them in the holy scriptures. So as that the person of the Father is not the Son; nor the Son, the Father; nor either of these the holy Ghost. Thus far the serious plain christian, may venture into this awful mystery of the blessed trinity.”

But as these reverend authors, in the following words, do not by any means advise the unlearned and private christian to search farther, so I cannot see any great necessity that he should.

P R O P O S I T I O N XVI.

Yet it is our duty to believe the general doctrine of the trinity, viz. that these three personal agents, Father, Son, and Spirit, have real communion in one godhead, although we cannot find out the precise way and manner of explaining it.

I Would have it observed here, that I do not absolutely determine the sacred doctrine of the trinity to be incapable of all explication: For though many past attempts may have been weak and insufficient, yet it does not follow that all future attempts shall be so too. Who can assure us that God will never give to any favourite christian the happy turn of thought, that may lead him, as by an easy clew, into the knowledge of this mystery? *Daniel* foretels, that towards the latter end of the world, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,” *Dan.* xii. 4. By a mutual commerce of the sentiments of men of learning and piety, and by the assistance of the divine Spirit, there may be some glorious spark of light cast upon this obscure article of faith, which former ages despaired of: Even as the great *Sir Isaac Newton* in our age has traced the nature, bulk, and motions of the heavenly bodies, beyond what all former ages knew, or what men on earth could ever have hoped for.

But

* Though these authors agree entirely with doctor *Owen*, in not making the knowledge of any particular explication of the doctrine of the trinity necessary to salvation, yet they differ in this; that doctor *Owen* in several parts of his treatise, supposes the vulgar explication of Father, Son and Spirit as three eternal, necessary, personal, differences in the very essence of God, to be a certain and unavoidable consequence of the doctrine itself: But the writer of these sections is not certain, that these differences of Father, Son, Spirit, generation, procession, &c. do relate to the divine essence itself; and in this point I ask leave to differ from that great man doctor *Owen*, and join with these later writers; for, in maturer years, I am not ashamed to profess my ignorance in a subject so sublime, and to abate some degrees of my younger confidence as to the modes of explaining this mystery.

But suppose this sacred doctrine, as to the manner of it, could never be explained by us, or to us in this present mortal state, yet all the cavils of our adversaries hitherto have never been able to prove, that this doctrine itself, free from all human additions and incumbrances, is really impossible; and therefore we are bound to believe this article, so far as God has plainly and evidently revealed it, though it should be to us inexplicable.

There is, I confess, a certain pride in the mind of man, that is ready to resist divine truth, if it does not lie level to our understandings, submit to our reasonings, and come within the compass of our clear and comprehensive ideas. It was this criminal pride, that has tempted some of the *socinian* writers to say, that if the doctrines of the divinity and satisfaction of *Christ* were never so plainly expressed in scripture, yet they would not assent to them in the literal sense, because they could not understand them, or because, according to the judgment of their reason, it could not be approved. Therefore they are wont to twist and turn the plain expressions of scripture by the arts of criticism and metaphor, to signify something else. *Socinus* himself says, that in such cases, "any the greatest force is to be used with words rather than take them in the obvious sense." "Epistola secunda ad Balcerim."

But surely it must be acknowledged that in the nature, works and ways of God, there are many things which are above the reach of our present understandings; many things which are true, and yet we know not how to reconcile them to one another. And whatsoever doctrines of this kind God shall plainly reveal to us in his word, we are bound under the penalty of his high displeasure, to receive and believe, though we cannot reconcile them.

But some will object and say, "Must we believe things that are inconsistent and assent to contradictions?"

Answer. There is a great deal of difference between a seeming and a real contradiction. If we can suppose, that it could ever have been said in scripture, that three Gods are one God, or three persons are one person, there had been reason indeed to disbelieve it in the literal sense, and to have found out some more consistent interpretation of it, according to the rules of speech: For neither reason or religion can require us to believe plain inconsistencies.

But when we assert that Father, Son and holy Spirit, are three distinct agents in our salvation, such as we usually call persons; and when we again assert that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God, and yet that there are not three Gods, but one God; there is no real contradiction in all these, though we could not find the plain, and certain way to reconcile them: And since these propositions are of such importance in our religion, since the sense of them is evidently contained in scripture, though not the express words; since they seem to lie plain and open to the view of any common reader, that has never been prepossessed with other notions, I think we may venture to say, God requires the belief of them where the bible is known and read.

Here some persons will be ready to say, "We cannot find these doctrines in the bible, we cannot see them written there with sufficient evidence, and therefore we believe them not; nor can we be required to believe what we cannot see revealed."

But these objectors would do well to ask themselves solemnly, as in the sight of God, "Whether or no they should not think them plainly and sufficiently revealed, if they could but reconcile them by reason to their own satisfaction?" If so, then it is plain, that the impediment of belief does not lie in the want of evidence, but in faulty prejudices and reluctance of the mind, because of the inability of our reason, to

comprehend what is revealed. We are not willing to see these truths, because difficulty and mystery attend them; and it is exceeding natural and easy to wink a little, when we are not willing to see.

Now if these secret prejudices are indulged, if we will not submit to receive these sacred truths, merely because we cannot comprehend and reconcile them, we have some ground to suspect ourselves guilty of that inward pride, and obstinacy of mind, which is highly criminal in the sight of God. And whether the great God will not terribly resent in the other world, these faulty prejudices, this haughtiness of the mind, this unbelief of truths so plainly revealed, is a thought that should make us tremble, and render us exceeding cautious, and meek, and humble in all our conduct about these important doctrines of religion.

I must confess for myself with honest freedom, that in my diligent search after truth in the bible, I would have been glad to have taken up with some ideas of the trinity, that might have been less subject to the cavils of human reason, and more easily comprehended and reconciled, if the plain and obvious sense of scripture in a multitude of places, had not constrained my faith to submit to divine revelation, and to acquiesce in this great truth, that "Father, Son, and Spirit, are three persons, and yet but one God."

I might here add another reason also, why we ought to believe, that these three persons have some real and intimate communion in the godhead, viz. because the characters and offices they sustain in the matter of our salvation, and the duties which we owe them, do in my judgement require the perfections of a God, that they may be fit to fulfil those offices, and to receive the homage of those duties. There appears to be a necessity of omnipotence and omniscience, and of other divine attributes, to execute those glorious works, which are assigned to the Son, and the holy Spirit, in the word of God, as well as those which are ascribed to the Father. Nor do I know how we can justly pay them honours answerable to these characters, if we believe them to be mere creatures.

P R O P O S I T I O N XVII.

And wheresoever we meet with any thing in scripture, that is incommunicably divine, ascribed to either of these three persons, we may venture to take it in the plain and obvious sense of the words, since we believe the true and eternal godhead to belong to them all.

IT has been hinted before, that there is a great deal of reason to suppose, that the *Arians* and the *Jocinians*, and all others who deny the proper godhead of the Son and Spirit, are guilty of a gross mistake; because there are so many places of scripture which they are forced to handle with much art and criticism, and to twist, and to strain, and to pervert them from their plain and native sense, before they can make them consist with the *arian* or *Jocinian* doctrines. But the christian who believes, that the Son and Spirit have proper communion in the godhead, reads with pleasure all those expressions of scripture, which ascribe divine titles and dignity both to the Spirit, and the Son, as well as the Father, and understands, and believes them in the plain sense of the words, with much satisfaction and ease, and lets his faith rest upon the express revelation of God in his word.

All that is incommunicably divine, and that is attributed to the Son or Spirit in scripture, is naturally and easily applied or imputed to the same godhead or divine nature,

nature, which belongs both to the Father, to the Son, and to the holy Spirit, or in which the Son and Spirit have communion together with the Father.

P R O P O S I T I O N XVIII.

Where any thing inferior to the dignity of godhead, is really and properly attributed in scripture to the person of the Son, or the holy Spirit, it may be easily imputed to some inferior nature, united to the godhead in that person, or to some inferior character or office sustained by that person.

HERE let it be observed, that there are some inferior properties and actions in scripture ascribed to God in general, and to the person of the Father, as well as to the Son and Spirit, which are not to be taken properly, but merely in a figurative sense, such as to have eyes and ears, hands and feet, to rejoice, to grieve, to repent, &c. Which signify the pure actions of God as an infinite Spirit, expressed towards his creatures in a figurative and familiar way, and in likeness to man, that we may understand them the better. These are not the inferior expressions which I speak of. But when any thing inferior to the dignity of godhead, is in a real and proper manner attributed to the Son, or the Spirit; then it is to be explained in one of these two ways which this proposition describes.

The reason of this proposition is evident; because since the Son, and the holy Spirit, are truly and properly partakers of godhead, or the divine nature, therefore nothing that is inferior to the nature of God, can be asserted concerning them, considered absolutely and simply as partakers in the divine essence. Whatsoever therefore is properly ascribed to any of these sacred persons, that is beneath the dignity of godhead, must arise from something external to God, something that is not essential to the divine nature.

Now this something external to God, is either real or relative. If it be real, it must be some inferior nature united to the godhead. If it be relative, it must be some inferior character or office, sustained by one of the sacred persons: And upon either of these accounts, we may suppose something inferior to the supreme dignity of godhead, to be ascribed to one or more of the sacred three.

Let us enquire particularly concerning this.

There are many things inferior to the dignity of godhead, which are evidently attributed to the Son in scripture; such as these, that he was "made of a woman," *Gal. iv. 4.* That he was in the "form of a servant," *Philip. ii. 7.* That he "increased in wisdom and stature," *Luke ii. 52.* That he "knew not the day of judgment," *Mark xiii. 32.* That he was hungry and thirsty, and asleep, that he wept, that he groaned, that he was forsaken of his Father, that his soul was exceeding sorrowful, that he was crucified, and died, that he rose again, and ascended to heaven.

But all these things are easily accounted for, by the union of the godhead, to the inferior nature of man, in the person of *Jesus Christ*. For he who was born of the virgin was *Immanuel*, or God with us, *Luke i. 54.* He who was true and real God, was also true and real man, and of the "seed of *David* according to the flesh," *Rom. i. 3.* He who was God over all, blessed for ever, according to his divine nature, "came from the *Jewish* fathers according to the flesh, or his human nature," *Rom. ix. 5.* He who was the true God was "manifested in the flesh," *1 Tim. iii. 16.* This is called the "incarnation of *Christ*," and the new testament is full of it.

Q O O . 2 .

Hence:

Hence it comes to pass, that the properties and actions of one nature are ascribed sometimes to the whole person, and sometimes to the other nature. So the Son of man is said to be in heaven, *John* iii. 13. and that while the man *Jesus* was here upon earth; because, as God, he was in heaven and earth, and every where present. So the Lord of glory is said to be crucified, *1 Cor.* ii. 8. because the man *Christ Jesus* was crucified, who in his divine nature is the Lord of glory. So the church is said to be "purchased with God's own blood," *Acts* xx. 28. because the blood of the man who was also God purchased the church. So "God laid down his life for us, *1 John* iii. 16. that is, he who was God laid down his human life. This is what divines usually call a communication of properties.

If there be any thing inferior to the dignity of godhead attributed to the Son or Spirit, which cannot be imputed to some real inferior nature, united to the godhead in that person, then it arises from something relative, and it must be attributed to some inferior character or office, sustained by that person in the oeconomy of our salvation.

Now there are some things that seem inferior to the dignity of godhead, which are attributed to the Son, even before his coming in the flesh, and being born of a virgin; as, that God the Father sent his Son into the world, which seems to imply his being before. That he "came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him," *John* vi. 38, 39. *Gal.* iv. 4. That he left the "glory which he had with the Father before the beginning of the world," *John* xvii. 5. That God the Father "prepared a body for him," *Heb.* x. 5. The Son came and assumed that body "to do the will of God on earth," verses 7, 9. compared with *Psal.* xl. 6, 7, 8. as he had been God's angel or messenger to the patriarchs.

Now if we can give ourselves leave to suppose, that the human soul of our Lord *Jesus Christ* had a being, and was personally united to the divine nature, long before his body was born of the virgin, even from the very foundation of the world, and that this was the angel who conversed with *Abraham, Moses, Joshua, &c.* then we may most easily account for these expressions of scripture, which signify something inferior to godhead before his incarnation; and we may attribute them to the human soul of *Christ*; which, though infinitely inferior to God, yet doubtless is a spirit of a very excellent and noble nature, as being formed on purpose to be united to God, and never existed but in a personal union with God.

There is nothing in the whole word of God, that I know of, which discountenances such a supposition as this; and there are a great many texts both of the old and new testament, which are with the greatest ease explained and reconciled this way, which it is very hard to account for, without admitting this opinion; nor has it the least ill aspect on any other article of our faith *.

But

* If any of my readers imagine, that either here, or in the end of this chapter, I have forgot the words of my title page, and have used the aid of human schemes, I intreat them to remember, that I have built nothing at all toward the proof of the trinity, upon any such supposition or scheme whatsoever; but have only proposed an illustration, a simile, a thought or notion, whereby the divine doctrine may be more easily apprehended, or whereby many texts of scripture may be more naturally explained, and more happily reconciled. Those who disapprove these hints, may entirely neglect them, and the plain scriptural doctrine of the trinity abides the same still.

I do not mention this pre existence of the human soul of *Christ* as a point of faith, which I firmly believe, but merely as a matter of opinion not to be rashly rejected, and well worth our farther enquiry; for I have not met with any thing yet published against it, that is sufficient to forbid the proposal of it here; and perhaps I shall say much more for it, if I should live to publish some short "dissertations" that I have written relating to the "doctrine of the trinity."

But if we dare not venture our thoughts so far out of the common track, as to suppose that the human soul of *Christ* had any being, before he took flesh, then we suppose, that he existed only in his divine nature before his incarnation; and then these inferior expressions of being God's messenger or angel, of having a body prepared for him by the Father, of being sent, of coming to do the will of his Father, and of not doing his own will, &c. must be attributed to his character and office as mediator, which carries something inferior in it, and which he assumed even from the beginning of the world: So that the Son who had all power and sovereignty as God, must be said under the character of a mediator, to be the messenger, the servant of God the Father, and be sent by him to do his will.

And thus by considering our Lord *Jesus Christ*, either in his inferior nature, as having a human soul, and a human body united to godhead, or in his inferior office as being a mediator, we may explain all those texts which ascribe something to him below the majesty of godhead. And where we cannot apply it to his human nature, it must be applied to his office.

I might multiply examples out of many parts of the new testament and the old, to shew with how much ease and readiness, this doctrine will assist us to explain and reconcile many things that are said concerning *Christ*; but I chuse rather to exemplify this, in explaining those difficult expressions of our Lord *Jesus Christ* concerning himself, which are recorded in *John* v. 19—30. "Verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doth, these also doth the Son likewise. The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth.—As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.—The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgement also, because he is the Son of man." And yet a little after, he saith again, "I can of my own self do nothing."

Here are some divine characters, which seem to be too great for any mere creature; such as, "Whatsoever things the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise. The Father sheweth the Son all things that himself doth. The Son raiseth the dead by his word, and quickeneth whom he will; all men must honour the Son, as they honour the Father. As the Father hath life in himself, so the Son hath life in himself."

Here are also some characters, that seem much inferior to the dignity of godhead; "The Son can do nothing of himself. Judgment is committed to him by the Father. He has it given to him, to have life in himself; and authority to execute judgement is given him." And it is repeated again, "Of himself he can do nothing," verse 30.

Now may not these scriptures admit of this exposition, imputing the inferior characters and expressions, to his inferior or human nature, thus? *Jesus* is but a man, and can do nothing of himself; but because the Man *Jesus* is the Son of man, or the appointed *Messiah*, as verse 27. therefore the Father has ordained, that he should be personally united to God, "it hath pleased the Father, that in him the fulness of godhead should dwell bodily;" thus the Son of man hath union with godhead given him: And by this means, he has it given him to have life in himself; for where godhead is, there also are the properties of godhead, one of which is, to have life in himself.

himself. By this means also the person of the Son as god-man, is said to know all things that the Father does, and doth the same things which he seeth the Father do, or performs that which the Father hath purposed. So the Son raiseth the dead, quickeneth whom he will, and executeth judgement on all mankind, and receiveth divine honours, as well as the Father: And yet he is said to have all this power and honour given him by the Father, because by the appointment of the Father, the divine nature dwells in *Jesus* the Son of man, who of himself, and in himself is but a man, and could do nothing.

The Son, as he is man, is represented here as able to do nothing of himself: The Father, though he be God, is represented as willing to do nothing of himself: Therefore the Father, whose divine nature dwells in the Son, doth all things by the Son, as his great agent and minister in the salvation of men.

Or if this interpretation does not please, we may then suppose, that the inferior characters here mentioned, are only attributed to *Christ* as mediator; and then the interpretation is this; viz. Though considered as God, he knows all things, he can do all things, and is the sovereign of life, yet considered as mediator, he is supposed to wave this sovereignty; and in this sense he may be said to receive these powers, instructions, and delegated authority from the Father, who sustains the sovereign or supreme character in the oeconomy of grace.

This shall suffice concerning the inferior actions and characters, which are ascribed to *Christ* in the scripture.

I proceed now to consider the holy Spirit.

There are also some things in scripture, which seem inferior to the dignity of godhead, that are attributed to the blessed Spirit, as that he is "sent by the Father at the Son's request," *John* xiv. 16. that "he is sent by the Son," *John* xv. 26. that "he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak," *John* xvi. 13. "That he shall receive the things of the Son, and shew them unto men," verses 14, 15. That the "holy Ghost was given to some men, by the laying on of the hands of other men," *Acts* viii. 17, 18. "That the Spirit is poured out upon men," *Acts* ii. 17, 18. That men are "baptized with the holy Ghost," *Matth.* iii. 11. "That he maketh intercession for the saints, with groanings that cannot be uttered," *Rom.* viii. 26, 27.

Now if there be no inferior nature, which belongs to the Spirit of God, to which these things may properly be ascribed, then they must be imputed to the Spirit of God, considered in the inferior character, or office of a deputy, or vicegerent, a messenger, or advocate*, both of the Father, and of the Son: And in this sense, he who considered as true God, is one with the Father, and hath absolute sovereignty; yet considered in the gospel, as a prime minister of the Father's and Son's kingdom, is pleased to represent himself as being sent by the Father and the Son, as their chief agent, to fulfil many kind offices for us, and in us, in the oeconomy of salvation.

If I could make this proposition clearer, and give my reader an easier conception of it by any human illustrations, I would attempt it in this manner, and try to represent

* The word *παράκλητος*, "paracletos," which we translate the "comforter," in the xiv. xv. and xvi. chapters of St. *John*, may be as properly rendered, the "advocate;" for that *greek* word signifies both. Now to be an advocate is the proper office of the holy Spirit, that is, to speak for God the Father, and for *Christ* in the world, since *Christ* is gone to heaven; and it is the very same word which we translate "advocate," *John* ii. 2. When it is applied to *Christ* as speaking for us in heaven.

present this divine mystery of three persons, with three distinct characters, yet but one God.

Suppose a king should send an ambassador extraordinary to a foreign country, and at his removal should appoint a resident to stay behind him in that country; and suppose the soul of the king himself could be so united also to the body, or person, both of the ambassador and the resident, as to animate, actuate and move them, and become, as it were, one person with each of them: Then the soul of the king himself might be said to sustain both his own character as king, and the inferior characters both of the ambassador and the resident, and fulfil all those offices under a distinct sort of personality.

Thus we may apprehend, how God the Father, the king of heaven, sent down his Son, a distinct person, in whom the same godhead dwells, as an ambassador extraordinary to earth; and the holy Spirit a distinct person also, who hath the same godhead, was left here as a resident. And thus this eternal God, being the same in the Father, Son and Spirit, sustains the superior character of a sovereign king, in the person of the Father, and may be said also to sustain these inferior characters of an ambassador, and a resident, and to fulfil these offices in the persons of the Son and Spirit.

I confess these "simile's" borrowed from earthly things, are very imperfect, and insufficient to represent things divine and heavenly; but perhaps they may serve to strike some little light upon this sacred mystery.

P R O P O S I T I O N X I X.

Nor do these inferior natures, characters or agencies, at all binder our firm belief of the godhead of these three persons, which is so plainly expressed in scripture, nor should it abate or diminish our sacred regards to them.

Whatsoever inferior nature may be united to the godhead in any of the divine persons, or whatsoever inferior characters or offices they may sustain in the matters of our salvation, these do not at all take away, or diminish the nature or dignity of the godhead, subsisting in that person. The divine nature must still maintain it's own honour and eternal dignity; for God must be God for ever, and cannot divest himself of his own real and essential glories, whatsoever condescending forms and offices he may assume, in order to fulfil his wonderful counsels, and designs of power or love, of creation or providence, or the greater work of redemption.

To make this very plain, I would express myself here thus in imitation of doctor Owen speaking of *Christ*. Each nature united in the person of *Christ*, is entire, and preserves to itself it's own natural properties. For he is no less true and perfect God, for being united to man; nor is he less a true, perfect man, consisting of soul and body, by being united to God. His divine nature still continues omniscient, omnipotent, infinite, &c. His human nature finite, or limited, in knowledge and power, and was, before it's glorification, subject to all infirmities of life, and death, to which the same nature in others absolutely considered, is obnoxious.

In each of these natures, he acts suitably to the essential properties and principles of that nature. As God, he made all things, upholds all things by the word of his power, fills heaven and earth, &c. As man, he lived, hungered, suffered, died, rose,

rose, ascended into heaven. Yet by reason of the union of both these natures in the same person, sometimes the person *Christ* may be said to do all these things; and sometimes the actions of one nature are attributed to the other; so God is said to lay down his life for us, &c. as I have shewn before.

So in the holy Spirit, the dignity of divine nature is preserved entire; and thus it acts like itself, with sovereign authority and power in many places of scripture; though in other places the person of the Spirit is represented as acting in a way of deputation, and, as it were, by commission received from the Father or the Son.

Still we must remember, that under whatsoever inferior characters or offices the Son or Spirit are represented in scripture, yet their communion in and with the divine nature ceases not, true godhead belongs to them still. And wheresoever true godhead is, there are all the attributes, honours, and prerogatives of godhead, whatsoever other or lower characters that person may also assume and sustain.

P R O P O S I T I O N XX.

We are bound therefore to pay divine honours to each of the sacred three, viz. the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, according to their distinct characters and offices assigned them in scripture.

THOUGH each person of the blessed trinity ought to have divine honours paid to him, yet these honours are generally distinguished, and expressed in such a manner, as is suited to their distinct personal characters, and operations, as they are revealed to us in the word of God, which is the only rule of our duty and worship.

Let it always be observed and kept in mind, that the only ground and foundation, and formal reason of the divine worship and honours, that are paid to each of the sacred three, is their godhead, or communion in the divine nature; yet the special forms of the worship and honour which is paid them, arise chiefly from those special offices and characters, which the scripture assigns to them.

Now in order to shew clearly, what are their distinct honours, together with the reasons of them, let us consider, in what manner the scripture represents their distinct characters and offices.

First, Of the FATHER.

God the Father, is represented in scripture generally as the first or supreme agent, but as acting by his word or Son, and through his Spirit, and that sometimes in the works of creation and providence, as well as in the works of redemption and salvation.

In "creation," this is sufficiently evident. *Psal. xxxiii. 6.* "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath, [or Spirit,] of his mouth."

Eph. iii. 9. "God who created all things by *Jesus Christ*."

Heb. i. 2. "By whom, [that is, his Son,] he made the worlds."

The Spirit also hath his share of agency herein. Thus

Job. xxvi. 13. "By his Spirit he garnished the heavens;" and his "Spirit moved on the face of the waters," *Gen. i. 2.*

And

And it is very natural to suppose that, since God the Father created all things by his Son, and his holy Spirit; therefore he says, *Gen. i. 26.* "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," consulting, as it were, with his Son, or with his Son and Spirit about the creation of man.

This is evident also in the administrations of "providence."

Isai. ix. 6. "To us a Son is born, that is, *Christ*, the government shall be upon his shoulder."

Psal. cx. 5. "The Lord at thy right hand, shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath," that is, *Christ* exalted to the right hand of God.

Matt. xxviii. 18. "Jesus spake to them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven, and in earth."

John v. 22. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son."

It is also by the Spirit, that the Father manages his providential kingdom.

Psal. civ. 36. When his creatures faint and die, God "sendeth forth his Spirit, and they are created, and thus he renews the face of the earth," that is, he continues a succession of creatures, by the agency of his Spirit, in the course of his providence.

Isai. xxxiv. 17. When God sends desolation, and wild beasts into *Babylon*, it is expressed, "his Spirit hath gathered them."

And that he acts thus by his Son, through his Spirit, in the work of our salvation, is much more frequently expressed in scripture. I shall mention but a few texts, and only such, where both the Son and Spirit are mentioned in the same place.

1 Pet. i. 2. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience; and the sprinkling of the blood of *Jesus Christ*."

2 Cor. i. 21, 22. "He which establisheth us with you, in *Christ*, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

Rom. v. 1, 5. "We have peace with God, through our Lord *Jesus Christ*.—The Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the holy Ghost which is given to us"

1 Cor. vi. 11. "Washed, justified, sanctified in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, and by the Spirit of our God."

John xiv. 16, 17. *Christ* saith, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth."

Acts ii. 33. "*Jesus* being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the holy Ghost, hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6. "God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying *Abba*, Father."

2 Cor. v. 18. "All things are of God, that is, the Father, who hath reconciled us to himself by *Jesus Christ*." Verse 5. "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, that is, fitted us for heaven, is God, who hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit."

And in this sense the evangelical benediction or blessing is thus expressed, "The grace of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy

Ghost, be with you all. Amen." 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And in this sense it is, that we are "baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy Ghost," *Matth.* xxviii. 19. For though I believe there may be a good consequential argument drawn from both these scriptures, to prove that the Son and the Spirit have real communion in the godhead, as well as the Father; yet the first and direct design, is to shew, that each of these divine persons have a share, and concur in the work of our salvation; and that faith, and hope, and all the blessings of grace and glory, depend on the eternal love of God the Father, exerting itself in a way of mercy to sinners, in and by the gracious mediation of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, through the operations of the blessed Spirit.

From all these, and many other scriptures, it is evident, that in the oeconomy of our salvation, God the Father appears as vested with the supreme majesty and dignity, and maintaining the rights of godhead, as sustaining the supreme character of a divine creator and governor, offended by the sins of men, contriving a way of reconciliation, sending his only Son into the world for this end, anointing him with his own Spirit, accepting him in his sacrifice and mediation, crowning him with honours upon the discharge of his atoning work, communicating the Spirit to him, to be sent down plentifully to mankind, proposing the gospel of reconciliation to sinful men, and ordaining and appointing all things which are done by the Son and Spirit, as distinct personal agents in this glorious affair; though in the godhead they are one with him.

Question. "What are those honours which the holy scripture therefore directs us to pay to God the Father?"

Answer. The honours which we are led more directly and specially to address to God the Father, are these.

I. To adore him as the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, *1 Pet.* i. 3. *Eph.* iii. 14. as the first in order in the sacred trinity. To worship him as sitting on the throne of government, *Rev.* iv. 9, 10. as maintaining the dignity and the rights of godhead, as creating all things, *Rev.* iv. 11. and giving laws and orders to all the creation: To humble and abase ourselves before him, as having broken his laws: To express repentance towards God, and say, "Father, we have sinned against thy heavenly majesty," *Acts* xx. 21. *Luke* xv. 18. And to return and devote ourselves afresh to God the Father, and subject ourselves to his government, against whom we had rebelled, *Hos.* xiv. 1, 2. There are so many instances of this kind of worship paid to God the Father in scripture, that I need not dwell longer upon this head.

II. Another part of divine worship due to the Father, is to offer our thanks and praises to him for all those adorable instances of his wisdom, power and goodness, which appear in the works of creation, providence and redemption: We praise him, that he should make us at first after his own image, endue us with noble faculties, and furnish this world with rich conveniencies for our use, and propose to our choice immortality and happiness. And when we had abused his goodness, and chosen sin and misery, that he should be pleased to look on fallen sinners with an eye of pity, that he appointed a way for their restoration to his favour and image, that he sent his own Son to become a mediator, that he laid on him the iniquities of men, and made his soul an offering for sin: That he also appointed the blessed Spirit to renew our natures, that he sends him to restore his own image upon us, to work faith and repentance in our hearts, to bring us into this covenant of reconciliation, and to fit us for heaven. Of this sort of worship, which consists in gratitude, doxology, blessing and praise, to the Father, there are multiplied instances in scripture.

III. We

III. We are bound also to pray to God the Father, for whatsoever mercies we stand in need of, as well as give thanks and praises to him for what we receive, whether these mercies are to be bestowed upon us immediately by the hands of the Son, or of the blessed Spirit; because both in the oeconomy of nature and grace, he is represented as the prime agent, vesting his Son and his holy Spirit with their peculiar characters and offices, and acting towards us, in and by them; though their eternal godhead be the same with that of the Father.

Thence it comes to pass, that God the Father is set forth in scripture as the most proper constant object of our addresses in worship, and that our worship is most generally to be paid to the Father in the name, or through the mediation of the Son, and by the assistance of his holy Spirit: For as it is by the mediation of his Son *Jesus Christ*, he approaches to us, and condescends to be reconciled to us, and by the operations of his blessed Spirit in us, he brings us near to himself, so he expects we should make a return of honour and worship to him in the same order and manner: And this we find appointed by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and required and practised by his blessed apostles. This is manifest in a great number of texts in the new testament.

John xvi. 23, 24. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you: Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name," verse 26. "At that day ye shall ask in my name."

John xiv. 16. *Christ* tells us, he "will pray the Father, and he shall give us another comforter,—even the Spirit of truth," &c. And *Luke xi. 13.* *Christ* says, "Your heavenly Father will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him." So that the gift of the holy Spirit, and his divine influences for illumination, sanctification and comfort, is one of those blessings which we are to ask the Father for, as *Christ* himself did.

Rom. vii. 25. "I thank God through *Jesus Christ* our Lord."

Rom. xvi. 27. "To God only wife be glory through *Jesus Christ* for ever, amen."

1 Cor. xv. 57. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord *Jesus Christ*."

Eph. ii. 18. "Through him, that is *Christ*, we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Eph. iii. 14, &c. "I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*,—that he would grant you to be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man. That *Christ* may dwell in your hearts by faith." Verse 21. "Unto him, that is the Father, be glory in the church by *Christ Jesus* throughout all ages."—

Eph. v. 20. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord *Jesus Christ*."

Phil. ii. 11. "That every tongue should confess, that *Jesus Christ* is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Col. iii. 17. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord *Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Heb. xiii. 15. "By him therefore, that is *Christ*, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

Eph. vi. 18. "Praying always, that is to God, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

Jude verse 20. "Praying in the holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God," that is the Father.

Rom. viii. 15. "Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba* Father."

Now while the Son and the blessed Spirit are made the glorious mediums of our worship, which is addressed in this manner to the Father, they receive honours from us, such as, I think, no mere creature can have a right to, and which may be justly called divine.

But there are proper divine personal honours and worship, which scripture gives us sufficient foundation to pay more directly to the Son, and the blessed Spirit themselves, according to their several characters in the dispensation of the gospel: And in order to find out what these are, let us consider how the Son and the Spirit are represented in the holy scripture, and what characters they sustain, as we have done concerning the Father.

Secondly, Of the SON.

The Son is represented in scripture, as being sent down to earth by the Father to do his will; as coming from heaven, and taking flesh upon him by the appointment of his Father, as undertaking and fulfilling the glorious offices of a prophet, priest, and king, and an example of holiness; as performing all the services, and enduring all the pains and sorrows, and death itself, which were appointed for him as our great reconciler, in order to make a full and proper satisfaction for our sins, and bring us into the favour of God; as rising again from the dead, and conquering death and hell; as interceding for us in heaven, and reigning there in glory; as sending his Spirit to convince and convert sinners, to sanctify and comfort the saints; as managing all the affairs of nature and grace, for his Father's honour, and the good of his people, according as the the Father has intrusted him with the government of the world and of the church; and as being ready to come with thousands of angels to judge the world, to condemn the wicked to eternal punishment, and to reward the saints with an everlasting heaven.

Therefore both the prophecies, precepts, and examples of scripture give us abundant encouragement to pay several acts of worship to the Son of God.

Question. "What are those acts of worship, and those honours which the scriptures lead us to pay to the Son?"

Answer I. We are bound to offer our humble adorations and acknowledgments, our thanks and praises to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, for all those gracious offices which he has, does, and will sustain and execute for our welfare and everlasting happiness. We adore him for his condescending mercy, and that infinite love that appeared in taking our nature upon him, and dwelling with men in such circumstances of poverty, meanness and disgrace. We adore his unspeakable pity in taking our sins upon him, and atoning for our guilt by his agonies in the garden, and his agonies on the cross. We adore and bless the prince of life who died for us, and rose again, and shews us the way to heaven. We bless him for sending his holy Spirit, for all the glorious purposes of our conviction, sanctification and salvation.

Now that direct addresses of praise and adoration may be paid to *Christ*, is very evident.

That it was our Lord *Jesus Christ*, or God the word, who was worshipped by the patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and *Moses*, whensoever God appeared in a bodily shape, and conversed with them, is plain; for the Father never appeared thus. It was he also whom *Joshua*, *Gideon*, &c. worshipped. He is the appointed object

object of worship. *Pfal.* ii. 11, 12. "Serve the Lord with fear; kiss the Son lest he be angry;—blessed are all they that put their trust in him." *Pfal.* xlv. 11. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him. And daily shall he be praised," *Pfal.* lxxii. 15. And if we turn to the new testament, we shall find both commands and examples of adoration and thanksgiving paid to *Christ*.

Jobn v. 22, 23. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men might honour the Son, as they honour the Father."

Pbil. ii. 10, 11. "That at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that *Jesus Christ* is Lord." And thus we are bound to adore him as Lord of all things, as universal sovereign of men and angels, of all the upper and the lower worlds.

1 *Tim.* i. 12. "I thank *Jesus Christ* our Lord, who hath enabled me, and put me into the ministry."

2 *Tim.* iv. 18. "The Lord, that is *Christ*, shall deliver me from every evil, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom: To whom be glory for ever and ever, amen."

So in 1 *Peter* iv. 11. There is a doxology or ascription of glory to our Lord *Jesus Christ*. "To whom be praise and dominion for ever, amen"

2 *Pet.* iii. 18. "Our Saviour *Jesus Christ*. To him be glory both now and for ever, amen."

And I think that doxology in *Jude* belongs to *Christ*, as I have shewn before, verse 25. "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever, amen."

So *Revel.* i. 5, 6 "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, amen."

Rev. v. 8, 9, 10. "They fell down before the lamb, and sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," verses 12, 13. "Saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb for ever and ever."

Rev. vii. 10. "Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb."

II. And as we are bound to offer thanksgiving and praise to him, and to ascribe to him, that glory and dominion which is his due, so it is our duty to pray to him, call upon him, and trust in him for those blessings, which he is exalted to bestow as our Saviour.

In short, there is no benefit which he is exalted to bestow upon us, but we may directly address him by faith and prayer for it. The following scriptures will make this evident.

Jobn xiv. 1. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," in which place, as well as many others, perhaps the word *πιστω* is better rendered "trust."

Acts xxii. 16. "Be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Stephen just expiring prayed to *Christ*, *Acts* vii. 59. "Lord *Jesus* receive my Spirit."

2 *Cor.* xii. 8. When St. *Paul* was buffeted by *Satan*, he prayed to *Christ* for relief.

"For this thing I befought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."

Pbil. ii. 19. "I trust in the Lord *Jesus* to send *Timotheus*."

1 *Theff.*

1 *Theff.* iii. 11. "Our Lord *Jesus Christ* direct our way unto you."

2 *Theff.* ii. 16, 17. "Our Lord *Jesus Christ* himself, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

The apostle *Paul* frequently concludes his letters, both to persons and to churches, praying for "grace and peace to descend upon them from our Lord *Jesus Christ*." The apostle *John* also does the same, 2 *John* verse 3. and *Rev.* i. 4, 5, Though whether these are so explicit, and direct addresses to *Christ*, has been matter of doubt and dispute.

And as he is expressly said to be "exalted as a prince, and a Saviour to give repentance to *Israel*, and forgiveness of sins," *Acts* iv. 31. So we may properly pray to him, and trust in him to bestow on us repentance and forgiveness.

III. Self-dedication and subjection of the soul to *Christ*, as a Lord and governor, is also a part of that honour and worship which is due to him; besides fear and love, &c.

2 *Cor.* v. 15. "He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and rose again."

2 *Cor.* viii. 5. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord."

John xiii. 13. "Ye call me master and Lord—and so I am."

John xiv. 15. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Here let it be observed also, that in several of these scriptures we are taught to pray to, or to praise, or to trust in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, not only for those blessings which he immediately bestows on us, but for those also which are bestowed more immediately by the holy Spirit, such as illumination, sanctification and comfort; because in the oeconomy of the gospel the Son of God acts toward us in many instances in and by the Spirit, and receives worship on that account; even as the Father acts in and by both the Son and the Spirit, and is accordingly worshipped, and praised for the blessings conferred on us by the Spirit or the Son.

Now because the performance of several of these offices, which our Lord *Jesus* fulfils, seems to require such a degree of knowledge, wisdom, power, glory and dignity, as belong only to the true God, and for which no person can be sufficient, which has not such an intimate union and communion in and with the divine nature; therefore when we pay these honours to *Christ* as mediator, we may be properly said to worship him with divine honours. We worship the godhead as dwelling in the man *Christ Jesus*; we worship the glorious person, "in whom dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily," *Col.* ii. 9.

And let it be noted also, that since he is the true God, or hath real communion in the divine nature, I see no plain reason why we may not worship the person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as the true God, even without any immediate regard to his mediatorial offices. Surely, I think, we may adore the "logos," or word, who "was with God," and who "was God," before the creation of the world, though we have now more express commands and more engaging motives to worship him as dwelling in our flesh; and as having fulfilled his mediatorial offices, and ascended to the highest heavens.

Thirdly, Of the HOLY SPIRIT.

I proceed now to consider the character and offices, sustained by the holy Spirit in scripture, and consequently what worship is due to him.

The

The holy Spirit is represented in scripture as a personal agent, through whom God created the world, and manages the affairs of providence and grace; it is the blessed Spirit who instructed his people, published the revelations of his mind and will, inspired his prophets, wrought miracles, conducted our Lord *Jesus Christ* during his humiliation, raised up *Christ* from the dead; and then as sent by *Christ* when he was exalted in heaven, he influenced and directed his apostles, gave them a variety of miraculous gifts, sends out ministers, calls sinners, convinces and converts them to faith and holiness, sanctifies, comforts, and establishes believers, prepares and seals them for heaven and glory.

I shall not repeat here the scriptures that mention the agency of the blessed Spirit in creation and providence, but only cite some few of those, which respect his influence on, and operations by the Lord *Jesus Christ* on earth, his agency on the prophets, the apostles, and the saints and churches.

I. On the PROPHETS.

Acts i. 16. "The holy Ghost by the mouth of *David* spake before."

2 *Pet.* i. 21. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost."

1 *Pet.* i. 11. "The Spirit of *Christ* which was in the prophets, testified beforehand the sufferings of *Christ*, and the glory that should follow."

II. On CHRIST on earth.

Matth. xii. 28. "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God."

1 *Tim.* iii. 16. "God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit," that is, proved to be the *Messiah* by the working of the holy Spirit."

1 *Pet.* iii. 18. "*Christ*—put to death in the flesh, quickened in, or by, the Spirit," that is, from the dead.

Acts i. 2. "After he through the holy Ghost had given commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen."

III. On the APOSTLES and MINISTERS.

John xiv. 26. "The holy Ghost shall teach you all things," and xvi. 13: "He shall guide you into all truth, and shew you things to come."

Acts ii. 4. "They were filled with the holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Rom. xv. 19. "Through mighty signs and wonders, which *St. Paul* wrought by the power of the Spirit of God."

1 *Cor.* xii. 4, 8, 11. "Diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; but all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Which manner of expression denotes a sovereign, a divine and personal agency of the holy Ghost.

The holy Spirit directed the apostles where to exercise their ministry. *Acts* viii. 29. "The Spirit said to *Philip*, go near, and join thyself to the chariot of the *ethiopian*." *Acts* x. 29. "The Spirit said to *Peter*, go with the servants of *Cornelius*, doubting nothing, for I have sent them:" And we read that he bid, and forbid *Paul* to go and preach in this, or the other place as he pleased, *Acts* xvi. 6, 7.

It is

It is the Spirit who appoints the ministers of the gospel. *Acts* xiii. 2. "The holy Ghost said, separate me *Barnabas* and *Saul*, for the work whereunto I have called them." And *Acts* xx. 28. "The elders of the church of *Ephesus* were made overseers by the holy Ghost."

IV. "On the world, but especially on the church."

John xvi. 8. "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." *John* xv. 26. "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, shall testify of me."

John iii. 5. "Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Rom. v. 5. "The love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the holy Ghost."

Rom. viii. 13. "If through the Spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body." Verse 16. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God."

Rom. xv. 16. "Being sanctified by the holy Ghost."

1 Cor. vi. 11. "Sanctified by the Spirit of our God."

Titus iii. 5. "We are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost."

Eph. i. 13. "Sealed with the holy Spirit of promise."

1 Cor. iii. 16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Chapter vi. verse 19. "Your body is the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you." Thus the Spirit of God dwells in the saints, as in his own temple.

And it is he also who directs and governs the churches of *Christ*. *Rev.* ii. 7. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

Now as the new testament is full of expressions of this kind, so there are several hints of this nature in the old testament also. *David* prays for the teaching and the leading of the Spirit of God, *Psal.* cxliii. 10. He prays that the holy Spirit may not be taken from him, and that God would uphold him by his free Spirit, *Psal.* li. 11, 12. And it is the great promise frequently repeated concerning the times of the new testament, that the Spirit of God shall be given to men, shall be poured out upon them, and not depart from them, but abide with them, as a principle of knowledge and holiness, *Isai.* xlv. 3. and lix. 21. *Joel* ii. 28.

Thus it is abundantly manifest, that the Spirit of God does almost every thing that is to be done in, or by the saints, the ministers, or the churches, in order to build and support the kingdom of *Christ* in the world, and to apply the redemption of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and render it effectual to the salvation of every single christian.

Now here arise three questions.

Question I. "What honours or what worship does the scripture encourage or warrant us to pay to the blessed Spirit, according to these glorious offices, which he sustains for our sakes, and the benefits which we receive from him?"

Answer. It has been already proved under the eighth proposition, that divine worship is paid in scripture to the holy Spirit, for we are baptized into his name," *Matth.* xxviii. 19. That is, we are devoted to his service. The sacred benediction or blessing is desired to descend upon the saints from the holy Spirit, as well as from the

the Father and the Son, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And the same is repeated by the apostle *John*, Rev. i. 4, 5. "Grace unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before the throne; and from *Jesus Christ*." Where it is generally supposed, that the blessed Spirit of God is described by seven spirits, because of his variety of gifts and graces.

We are required also not to quench the Spirit, 1 *Thess.* v. 19. not to grieve the holy Spirit of God, *Eph.* iv. 30. that is, not to resist his convictions and pious motions, as the *jews* did in elder and in later days, for which they are severely reprov'd. *Acts* vii. 51. but to obey and comply with all his holy influences, and have a most sacred regard to them.

And since there are none of us but have in some instances, more or less, resisted and quenched the good motions of the blessed Spirit, I think we may justly be allowed to mourn before him, and confess to him how much we have injured his love, and take shame to ourselves before him, for all these indignities and provocations.

As we are said also in scripture to be led by the Spirit, to be taught by the Spirit, to be strengthened and comforted by the Spirit, to be assisted in prayer, and in every good work by the same Spirit, so it is our duty to wait and depend on him for instruction, consolation and assistance in all the affairs of the christian life.

Question II. "Is it proper for us to address ourselves in a way of prayer or praise, directly to the blessed Spirit, since we can neither find it plainly commanded or practised in the word of God?"

Answer. I confess we cannot find in scripture any such positive and express precepts or examples of petition and praise, so directly addressed to the person of the holy Spirit, as there are to the Father and to the Son.

One reason may be this, because in the oeconomy of the gospel he is not seated on a throne of majesty, nor sustains a royal character; but he is rather represented as acting in subordination to the Father and the Son, and sent by the Father and the Son, as a prime minister in their kingdom. And therefore since our worship of the blessed trinity is generally regulated by the oeconomy of the gospel, our direct addresses are generally made to the Father or to the Son, who are seated on a throne, and sustain a royal character in this oeconomy.

I would add also, that though the Son himself is represented as Lord and king in this oeconomy, yet he is often described as acting in subordination to the Father: And it is for this reason, it may be, that there are but few addresses made directly and distinctly to the Son of God himself in the scripture, in comparison of those which are made in general to God, or distinctly to the Father.

Another reason why the holy Spirit has not such direct and express addresses made to him as the Father and the Son in scripture may be this, that the agency and seat of the Father and Son are described as in heaven, where they dwell, to receive our homage and worship, and to send down blessings; but the agency and seat of the holy Spirit is within us, where he dwells to assist us in paying that homage and worship to the Son and the Father. Now there may seem to be some reason, why our direct adorations and addresses of prayer and praise should chiefly be offered to those persons of the sacred trinity, which are represented as sitting upon a throne in heaven, rather than to that person who is represented as dwelling within ourselves, and exerting his divine powers there.

Yet since we have proved before, that the Spirit hath real, true and proper communion in the godhead, and that he is one God with the Father and the Son, it is

certain that he knows all our wants, our desires and our petitions, for he is omniscient: He is able to supply them all, for he is almighty: And he is particularly ordained in this glorious oeconomy to enlighten, convince, convert, sanctify, comfort, and save us, to bestow gifts, graces and divine blessings upon us; and to fit us for the inheritance of heaven; and upon these accounts there is sufficient ground, in my judgment, to address ourselves to him by way of prayer, for the spiritual mercies we want; and by way of praise, for the blessings we receive; and especially upon some particular occasions, wherein the agency of the Spirit is most eminently concerned.

There is this plain reason for it.

If there be any mere creature, to whom I can certainly communicate the knowledge of my wants, who has also power to supply them, and has a particular office or appointment for this end, surely all the light of reason and scripture lead me to address him by petition for a supply, and to give him thanks for what I have received; much more then may I pay the same sort of honours in a divine manner, to the blessed Spirit, who is the true God, and knows all my wants, and all my prayers and praises.

Finally, Since learned men have found in the primitive ages, some few hints or examples of a doxology, or ascription of praise to the holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son, though there be no such example in scripture, and since this has been the frequent custom of the church in all these later ages, I cannot see any sufficient reason to renounce or forsake it, since it is built on such plain and natural reasonings and consequences drawn from scripture.

It may be expedient to practise it frequently in some churches where it has been long used, lest great offence be given; it may be proper also sometimes to use it on purpose to hold forth the doctrine of the trinity in times of error, and to take away all suspicion of heresy from the public worship.

Yet I cannot but give my opinion, that since the apostles continually vary their doxologies, it is a piece of christian prudence not to confine one's self everlastingly to any one certain form of doxology, lest the people think that very form to be of sacred necessity: And I am not willing to be the man who should venture to say, there is an absolute necessity of using any doxology, which has no pattern or precept in scripture.

We must have a care lest we make any thing necessary by mere human custom or constitution, which the holy scripture hath not made so by a divine appointment. For though I have shewn that there is in scripture a sufficient foundation to allow and support the common doxology, yet there is no plain and positive command for it there, nor any account of the practice of it *.

Question

* The doxologies used in the new testament are these, viz. *Rom.* xi. 36. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever, amen." *Rom.* xvi. 27. "To God only wife be glory through *Jesus Christ*, for ever, amen." *Gal.* i. 4, 5. "According to the will of God and our Father. To him be glory for ever and ever, amen." *Ephes.* iii. 21. "To him be glory in the church, by *Christ Jesus*, throughout all ages, world without end, amen." *Phil.* iv. 20. "Now to God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, amen." *1 Tim.* i. 17. "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, amen." *1 Tim.* vi. 16. "Whom no man hath seen, or can see. To whom be honour and power everlasting, amen." *2 Tim.* iv. 18. "The Lord shall deliver me, &c. to whom be glory for ever and ever, amen." *Heb.* xiii. 21. "The God of peace, through *Jesus Christ*, to whom be glory for ever, amen." *1 Pet.* iv. 11. "That God in all things may be glorified, through *Jesus Christ*, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, amen." *1 Pet.* i. 3.

• Blessed

Question III. "Is it lawful in our doxologies or ascriptions of praise, to pay the same worship to the holy Spirit, or to the Son, as we do to the Father?"

Answer I. It is the divine nature or godhead in each person, that is the only foundation of divine worship; and since it is one and the same godhead, that subsists in the Spirit and the Son, as in the Father, therefore when we use such acts and forms of devotion in blessing and praising God, as agree to the godhead considered absolutely in itself, we may pay the same worship to Father, Son and Spirit, or to the godhead subsisting in three persons. But secondly,

Answer II. If we consider the three persons of the trinity in their distinct personal properties and characters, it is utterly inconsistent with the whole current of scripture to pay the same form of address and adoration to each of the sacred three. As for instance,

We adore the Father as the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as the first person in the sacred order of the trinity; we bless him for sending his own Son into our nature, and for appointing him to be our high priest, our sacrifice, and our great reconciler; we give him thanks for the gift of his holy Spirit, given first to *Jesus Christ* our Lord, and by him to us. But we cannot offer the same forms of expression, nor indeed the same acts of inward worship to the persons of the Son or the holy Spirit.

In like manner we give praise and thanks to the Son; that he condescended to be made "partaker of our flesh and blood;" that he "bore our sins in his body on the tree;" that he was "slain, and washed us in his blood, and redeemed us to God, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father;" we bless him, because he intercedes for us at the throne in heaven; and that he, by his Father's appointment and deputation, governs and disposes of all things for the good of his church here on earth. Now these doxologies or thanksgivings cannot be addressed to the person of the Spirit, nor to God the Father.

And I think it is in this sense, we may best understand those words in *John v. 22, 23*. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men might honour the Son, as they honour the Father." That is, since the Father, who is represented as the original governour and judge of mankind, hath vested the Son as mediator with this authority of government and judgment, therefore those divine honours that belong to the Father, considered as governor and judge, may be properly paid to the Son; and this without the least infringement of the rights of godhead, since the Son is also true God, or hath communion in the divine nature. For though I do not think it is the direct design of that place to express the divinity of the Son, yet I think that such a command would not have been given if the Son had not been true God.

Q q q 2

Yet

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*." *2 Pet. iii. 18*. "Our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, to him be glory both now, and for ever, amen." *Jude* verse 25. "To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever, amen." *Rev. i. 5, 6*. "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, &c. be glory, and dominion, for ever and ever, amen." *Rev. iv. 11*. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." *Rev. v. 12*. "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing." Verse 13. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever, amen." *Rev. vii. 10*. "Salvation unto our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb." Verse 12. "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God, for ever and ever, amen." *Rev. xix. 1*. "Alleluiah: salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God."

Yet let it be noted here, that we cannot address *Jesus Christ* the Son, considered personally, in all respects with the same honours as we address the Father; because we cannot say to *Christ*, "Lord, thou art the God and Father of *Christ*; thou art the original judge of all, and thou hast given all judgment into the hands of thy Son." These sort of addresses belong peculiarly and only to the Father, and if paid to *Christ* personally considered are ridiculous and absurd.

But to proceed. We may pay also divine honours and praise to the holy Spirit for his miraculous gifts of old, for inspiring the prophets and apostles, for all his distributions of gifts, graces, and sacred influences to his churches, his saints, and his ministers in our days. But if we mention expressly his deputation to this sacred office by the Father and the Son, then we give thanks to the holy Spirit, who has accepted this office in our salvation, to enlighten, comfort and sanctify us; and in executing this blessed office by commission from the Father and Son, distributes his gifts and his graces among us. Now this form of words could not properly be used in an address to the Father, nor to the Son. Yet in the third place,

Answer III. I would make this remark here, viz. That when we mention merely the benefits that we receive from the Son or Spirit, we may give thanks to God the Father for them all, because in the order of the gospel, he sent both the Spirit and the Son to provide and bestow those blessings on us. Thus we may bless God the Father for the atonement of *Christ*, and his glorious righteousness; for the providential government of *Christ* over the nations, and his spiritual government over his church, as well as for the enlightening, sanctifying and comforting influences of the holy Ghost, &c.

We may give thanks also to the Son, for all the benefits that we receive from the holy Spirit, for it is the Son who by the appointment and gift of the Father sends the holy Spirit to us.

But we cannot properly give thanks to the Son or the Spirit, considered in their distinct personal characters, for all the benefits and blessings which are particularly attributed to the Father in scripture; such as contriving our salvation, sending the Son to purchase it, and by the hands of the Son sending the Spirit to apply it; for this would bring confusion into that admirable divine order, which God hath established in our salvation.

All these things flow with so clear and natural an evidence from the scriptures, which have been before cited, that it is needless to cite and repeat them here.

Thus it is abundantly evident, that distinct personal honours, must be addressed to the three sacred persons, on the account of their different properties, characters and offices, though the same absolute and essential honours of the deity or godhead may be addressed to all three together, or to God subsisting in three persons. Now in the fourth place,

Answer IV. To give a short and direct answer to the third question. When the common doxologies are used, wherein glory is given to the Father, Son and Spirit, in the same form of words, we may either understand the absolute essential honours of godhead, which we give to the divine nature, subsisting in Father, Son and Spirit; or we may in our thoughts give adoration and thanks to each of the sacred three for the various and distinct offices they sustain, and distinct benefits we receive from them.

If we may dare to make use of the similitude before mentioned, and conceive of a king, whose soul doth also animate and actuate an ambassador extraordinary and a resident in a foreign country, and by their means bestow blessings on his subjects in that foreign country, we may in some measure apprehend how far each of

these

these persons may have communion in the same royal honours, and how far their particular personal honours are distinct from each other: But no human simile can perfectly express things divine.

To conclude, I have here shewn what are the general honours of the godhead subsisting in three persons; and what are the particular divine honours that belong to each person, as sustaining particular characters and offices in the oeconomy of creation, providence and redemption. And though the Son and the Spirit may be properly addressed with divine honours, as having communion in true godhead, yet since the scripture is given us to direct our worship, is it not better in our most common and usual addresses to God to follow the express directions and examples of scripture, and imitate the inspired apostles, those first and most glorious christians?

And since we find so great a silence in scripture of any express precepts or patterns, of prayer or praise, directed distinctly to the person of the blessed Spirit, let us not bind it upon our own consciences, nor upon others, as a piece of necessary worship; but rather practise it occasionally as prudence and expedience may require.

Since we find both precepts and patterns for prayer and praise to be often addressed to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, let us also often call upon the name of the Lord *Jesus*, and direct frequent doxologies to the lamb that was slain.

But since the most frequent patterns and precepts in scripture lead us to direct our addresses to God the Father, who transacts all his affairs with us, in and through his Son by his holy Spirit, I think we should also make it the most frequent and usual practice in our devotions, "to have our access through *Jesus Christ*, by one Spirit unto the Father," *Eph. ii. 18.* that is, to address the Father, by the mediation of the Son, through the assistance of the holy Spirit; that this divine oeconomy, which is the substance and glory of the christian religion, and runs through the whole of it, might be visible also in our common devotions, and appear manifestly to run through the several parts of christian worship in which we are engaged.

P R O P O S I T I O N XXI.

In so doing we shall effectually secure our own salvation: For the scripture has made our salvation to depend on those relations and offices which these divine persons sustain, and on the honours due to them according to these offices, rather than upon any deep philosophical notions of their essence and personalities, any nice and exact acquaintance with their mysterious union and distinction.

I Have said before, that I know not how we can pay such honours and worship to *Christ* or the blessed Spirit, as are expressed and described in the new testament; unless we suppose them to have some real communion in the divine nature, and to have true godhead belonging to them: Yet if we turn over all the books of the new testament, we shall find that the stress of our salvation is laid upon our humble sense of our sins, our return to God the Father by sincere repentance, and change of heart and life, and our unfeigned faith in the Lord *Jesus*. These were the great and glorious things that *St. Paul* mentions as the sum of his preaching in order to the salvation of men. *Acts xx. 21.* "Testifying both to the *jews* and also to the *greeks*, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord *Jesus Christ*."

And when the things absolutely necessary to salvation are mentioned, which relate particularly to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, these are generally comprehended in a belief

belief of the characters and offices of *Christ*, as the great promised *Messiah*, as a Saviour, a prophet, a mediator, a priest, and proper sacrifice of atonement, as a Lord and king, as an example, as a head of vital influence, as our final judge, &c. together with our sense of his all-sufficiency for those offices, and our sacred practical-regards to him in the discharge of them. These are the chief things required in order to salvation; and not a distinct knowledge or belief how or in what manner he is the same with the Father, and in what manner he differs from the Father.

The language in which the requisites of salvation are generally expressed, as they relate to *Christ* or the holy Spirit, is as follows.

Acts xvi. 31. "Believe on the Lord *Jesus*, and thou shalt be saved."

Mark i. 15. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel," that is, the glad tidings of peace with God by *Jesus Christ* the *Messiah*.

Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

John viii. 24. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins," that is, if ye believe not that I am the *Messiah*, the promised Saviour of mankind.

Acts ii. 38. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of *Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost."

John iii. 3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," verse 5. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:" that is, except he be inwardly regenerated, sanctified and cleansed from sin by the influence of the holy Spirit, as we are outwardly baptized and cleansed with water, he cannot be saved.

Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have not the Spirit of *Christ*, he is none of his." Verse 13. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Rom. x. 9. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord *Jesus*, and shalt believe with thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Verse 13. "He that calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Acts x. 43. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins."

John i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name."

John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him."

Rom. iii. 25. "Him hath God set forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood."

2 Tim. i. 12. "I know whom I have believed, that is *Christ*, and I am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day."

Heb. v. 9. "He became the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him."

John vi. 40. "This is the will of him that hath sent me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: And I will raise him up at the last day."

Now faith or believing in our Lord *Jesus*, is most frequently mentioned here: And this, so far as we can find it explained in scripture, and made necessary to salvation, signifies chiefly, a believing him to be the *Messiah*, the *Christ*, who was foretold by all the antient prophets as the Saviour of mankind, and it includes in it, or necessarily

necessarily draws after it, such addresses of the soul, and sacred regards to him, as are suited to his character as the Lord and Saviour of mankind, and the only and all-sufficient mediator between God and man.

The only difficulty lies in this, that several places of the new testament seem to make a belief of *Christ* to be the Son of God necessary to salvation, as *John* xx. 31. "These things are written, that ye might believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." 1 *John* v. 13. "These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." 1 *John* iv. 15. "Whosoever shall confess that *Jesus* is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him." 1 *John* ii. 23. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father."

Now the objection runs thus. If we are required to believe that *Christ* is the Son of God, then we must know and believe what is this relation of sonship to God the Father in order to salvation, and this seems to be more than a mere knowledge and belief of his offices, and his all-sufficient capacity to fulfil them.

In answer to this objection, I have shewn in a particular discourse, which I had designed once to publish at the end of this book, what appears to me the true meaning of this name, "Son of God;" and upon the best judgement I can make, by a comparison of scriptures together, I am inclined to believe that this name Son of God signifies, "That glorious person who has in general some peculiar and sublime relation to God the Father, and is appointed to be the *Messiah* or Saviour;" and the chief things included herein are his office and his divine fitness and capacity to fulfil it; and it is under this notion *Christ* was preached to the *jews*, and believed on by the disciples. It is this that renders him directly suitable to the necessities of perishing sinners, and a most proper object for the exercises of a saving faith. This therefore is the most natural and probable sense of this title, "the Son of God," in the general use of it in the new testament; and especially in those places where our salvation is made to depend on the belief of it.

This imperfect idea or conception of some glorious and peculiar but unknown relation to God, seems to be the utmost which at that time the disciples could well arrive at, concerning his Sonship.

How far they could be apprized of his true godhead, I make not the matter of my present enquiry: Their faith of that sometimes at least seemed to be fluttering and dubious. But as to their notion of his sonship, they seem to have no certain idea whether it related to his body, or his soul, to his divine nature, or his office, or to several of these together.

It is hard to suppose, that the eternal generation of the Son of God, as a distinct person, yet co-equal, and consubstantial, or of the same essence with the Father, should be made a fundamental article of faith, in that dawn of the gospel, that hour of *jewish* twilight between declining *judaism* and rising christianity. It is very hard to imagine, that God should propose so sublime a doctrine of so obscure and doubtful evidence in that day, as a test to the faith of poor ignorant fishermen, and pronounce damnation on the disbelief of it.

I am persuaded therefore, that faith in him as the divine *Messiah*, or the all-sufficient and appointed Saviour, is the thing required in those very texts where he is called the Son of God, and proposed as such for the object of our belief: And that a belief of the natural and eternal and consubstantial sonship of *Christ* to God as a Father, was not made the necessary term or requisite of salvation, neither in those

texts:

texts before-mentioned, nor in any others. Nor indeed can I find it asserted or revealed with so much evidence in any part of the word of God, as is necessary to make it a fundamental article of my faith.

This doctrine of the co-eternal generation and consubstantial and co-equal sonship, is but one of the learned schemes found out to explain the "modus" or manner of one godhead subsisting in distinct persons. Now I would fain have my readers learn that our faith in the scripture doctrine of the true and eternal godhead of *Christ*, which is plainly revealed, does not necessarily depend on any of those learned schemes and explications, which, if they are not merely humane, yet are of more doubtful revelation, and a matter of difficulty and dispute even among the learned and pious trinitarians.

I grant it indeed a very possible thing, that the great God may propose any sublime truth to our belief, as a test of the obedience of our understandings to his word, and a trial of the submission of our reason to faith and divine revelation. But then such a truth must be revealed with bright evidence, and great plainness in the word of God. And we ought to keep our consciences under so awful a sense of this sovereignty of God, as to make us willing to submit our belief to every such truth plainly revealed in scripture, even though it may surmount our present comprehension. And since God hath revealed it, I think, with sufficient evidence in scripture, that the Son and holy Spirit have real communion with the Father, in the divine nature or godhead, and are the one true God, we should be much afraid to allow our selves in any degrading sentiments concerning those glorious persons, and maintain a holy jealousy, lest we defraud them of that due honour and divine veneration, which belongs to those sacred three who are in one godhead.

Yet if I may give up my thoughts and judgment entirely to the conduct of scripture, I am there led to believe that the practical concern we have with these three persons of the blessed trinity, is of far greater importance in the matter of salvation, than any of the nice and speculative notions and terms of art concerning the essence, union, and distinction of the Father, Son and holy Spirit; though we must always take heed to maintain such notions concerning their nature, powers and properties, as are sufficient to support and justify all the practical honours and duties we pay to them.

P R O P O S I T I O N XXII.

The man therefore who professes each of the sacred three to have sufficient divine power, and capacity to sustain the characters, and fulfil the offices attributed to them in scripture, and pays due honour to them according to those offices, may justly be owned by me, and received as a christian brother; though we may differ much in our notions and opinions about the explication of the blessed trinity, or though we may both be ignorant or doubtful of the true way of explaining it.

NO man can pay the honours due to our Lord *Jesus*, unless he believe him to have the dignity and perfections of godhead belonging to him, so far as to answer the purposes of an all-sufficient sacrifice, and atonement for sin, so far as to give him universal acquaintance with the infinite affairs of his kingdom in the world and the church, together with equal power to manage and controul all things in the regions

gions of heaven, earth and hell : But these powers and capacities do not depend on any particular mode of explaining the trinity.

No man can pay the honours due to the blessed Spirit, unless he believe him to have such communion in godhead, as to render him fit for the universal agent or minister in this most extensive kingdom of *Christ*, that he may both know and influence all the infinite affairs of creation and providence and grace : But these powers and capacities do not depend on any particular mode of explaining the trinity.

No man therefore, in my judgment, can pay due honours to the Son or Spirit, unless he believe them to be the true God ; though he may pay all necessary honours to them without knowing how to explain the "modus" or manner how they are one God and yet distinct persons.

He therefore that appears to me to be a hearty lover of God and *Jesus Christ*, a humble inquirer and searcher after truth, that believes and professes our Lord *Jesus* and the blessed Spirit to have such a real communion in the divine nature, or such an oneness with God, as is sufficient to sustain all the glorious offices which are assigned to them in scripture, particularly the satisfaction for our sins, the sanctification of our natures, and the government and influence over the visible and invisible worlds, and such as is sufficient to render them the proper objects of divine worship according to those various offices, he shall not be excluded by me from the number of the faithful, for any defect in this article of the catholic faith.

And if he make this confession honestly in any words of his own chusing, and make it evident to me, that his sense and meaning amounts to what I have here expressed, I shall venture to call him my fellow christian and my brother ; nor shall I dare to condemn him, though he refuse to make use of the expressions I have here written, or any other words that I should chuse for him. If a man has "faith and knowledge," though I may fancy him to be rude in knowledge and weak in the faith, yet I am commanded to receive him, and "not to doubtful disputations," *Rom. xiv. 1.*

But while I am professing christian charity, I would set a due honour and defence upon the christian faith ; and amidst all my love to men, I would remember what honours are due to *Christ*, "my Lord and my God." "Whosoever abideth not in the necessary doctrine of *Christ*, hath not God, nor is he to be received into the church," nor the house, as a christian brother, or as a friend. *2 John* verse 9. If I read and believe the word of God, I must believe there are some such gross errors in doctrine, that will as effectually exclude from the church of *Christ* and from the kingdom of heaven, as gross immoralities in practice : There are such things as damnable heresies which will bring upon the professors of them swift destruction ; and the apostle assures us that one of these heresies is a "denial of the Lord that bought them," *2 Pet. ii. 1.*

C O N C L U S I O N.

BEfore I put a full end to this little treatise, I would ask leave of my readers, and especially those of younger years, to propose to them these two heads of advice relating to the doctrine of the trinity. The first refers to our inquiry into the doctrine itself. The second to our establishment in the faith of it.

The directions I would give concerning our inquiries into this great doctrine are these.

I. "Seek for it chiefly in the word of God;" build your faith entirely upon this word, and not upon the books of men. There you will be sure to find no human additions to it, but the pure divine doctrine itself. And whensoever you consult the writings of men on this subject, dare to admit nothing but what you see evidently proved by the word of God. Judicious collections out of the holy scripture relating to this article, are of great use, when they are not chosen and culled out, and put together merely to serve and support some particular scheme of explication. Though the writings of men may be of great service, yet you must use them only as helps not as determiners of your faith.

II. "Read the word with holy reverence and humility of soul," resolving to believe whatsoever you find there plainly revealed, whether you can reconcile it or no to your own fancies or former opinions. Read with an awful submission of your understandings to the authority of God speaking in his word. See Proposition XVI.

III. "Read and pursue your inquiries with a solemn concern about the importance of this doctrine:" Let not a vain, light, airy spirit tempt you ever to think or speak of it as a trivial matter, nor to mix it with common careless talk, nor profane it by noisy janglings, and a vain affectation of disputes about so divine a mystery. I fear this is a most provoking sin in our day.

IV. "Read with an abasing sense of your own weakness and darkness of mind," and with importunate prayer to God for the teachings of his Spirit, who searches the deep things of God, and is promised to be given to those that ask it, and to lead them into all necessary truth.

V. "Set yourself to this work with great solemnity," and let your judgment determine itself in this important article, as in the presence of God your supreme and final judge. Dare not to indulge any old prejudices, or a vain affectation of novelty. Do not consult with flesh and blood, or suffer any carnal interests to have influence upon your judgment, or to bias your assent to any principle or opinion. Let nothing but the convincing evidence of scripture decide the question, and settle your faith. Take heed lest you build your belief upon any reasons or motives which you cannot justify to your conscience under the sharpest and severest enquiry: nor take up merely with such a shew of argument, either to confirm or renounce any important article as you dare not produce at the bar of God, and speak it boldly as a proof of your faith in the face of men and angels.

VI. And while you read and meditate on this subject, and pursue your inquiries about this important point of religion, "watch and preserve a pure and holy frame of soul." Take heed lest you indulge a haughty, or a sensual, sinful temper; examine your hearts and your ways, and remove every iniquity; lest the great and dreadful God, who is jealous for the honour of his name, should be provoked to leave you to your own darkness, or abandon you to the foolish fires of fancy; lest he should give you up in judgment to the vain dictates of a proud and conceited mind, and thereby you may be intangled in the most pernicious errors, or lost in everlasting wanderings.

The directions which relate to our establishment in the faith of the trinity are these.

I. "Furnish your memory with those portions of holy scripture, wherein this sacred doctrine is most clearly expressed," and by which it is most effectually supported: That you may be "ready to give to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear;" *1 Pet. iii. 15.* that you may have an answer ready at hand to repel the assaults of error and temptation. The sword of the Spirit,

Spirit, which is the word of God, and the shield of faith in that word, are admirable pieces of christian armour and artillery in an evil day.

II. "Maintain a firm and resolute assent to what the word of God plainly reveals concerning this divine doctrine," and be not ever wavering and tossed in your mind, with a kind of doubtful uncertainty, merely because you cannot explain the matter, and adjust every difficulty.

Keep on your spirit such a holy awe of the majesty and authority of God speaking in his word, that you may never stagger in the faith, which you can find so clearly dictated from heaven. Nor be ashamed to profess it at all proper occasions.

Having settled the substance of this doctrine in your minds, and founded it on the plain and solid evidence of scripture, you ought not to doubt and waver, much less to desert your faith merely because you cannot answer every objection against it: For even in the affairs of nature and the civil life, as doctor *Owen* well expresses it, "If the objections wherewith we may be entangled be not of the same weight and importance with the reason for which we embraced any opinion, it is a madness to forego it on the account thereof. And much more must this hold amongst the common sort of christians, in things spiritual and divine. If they will let go, and part with their faith in any truth, because they are not able to answer distinctly some objections that may be made against it, they may quickly find themselves disputed into atheism."

In every sacred truth that is revealed to us, a plain evidence and full assurance that God hath said it, should be a sufficient answer to a thousand objections.

III. Since a particular knowledge of the "modus" or manner, how three persons are one God, is not clearly revealed in scripture, and therefore not necessary to salvation, "Be not too fond of any learned explications of this sacred mystery." Do not give into them too soon, nor yield your full assent to them too easily, nor be furiously zealous in the defence of them. Do not fix and root your judgment too fast in any of these schemes of explaining the trinity, till you see most abundant and convincing evidence; and take care that you do not mingle any of these explications with the plain scriptural doctrine, so as to make them necessary articles of your faith. Hereby you will obtain great advantage in a day of temptation, as will appear thus;

You may observe it has been the usual and subtle practice of our adversaries to cavil at our faith of the trinity by perplexing some part of our learned explications and schemes with knotty objections and arguments: And many times they have found themselves so successful herein, that they have sorely shaken the faith of many a christian, merely because he had mingled his opinions and his faith together, and joined the scriptural doctrine of the trinity together with some learned hypothesis to explain it, in the same article of his faith. Whereas a man that well distinguishes between the plain scriptural doctrine itself, and the particular explications of it, holds his faith in the divine doctrine firm and unmoved, while several human forms of explication are attacked, and perhaps destroyed. Such a christian may triumph in a day of temptation, and may defend his creed, by keeping close to what the scripture has most evidently revealed, while he sees others that have built a high superstructure of notions about this doctrine, make shipwreck of their opinions, and their faith together.

IV. I would add this also, that one effectual method to establish the heart in this divine and important truth, is to "to take a due survey what a sacred influence it has into all the parts of our holy religion:" And when we feel the daily want of the blessed trinity, we shall not easily part with the doctrine. Let us keep a humble sense of the

deplorable state of sin and ruin, into which the fall of man has brought us, and then we may see what need there is of the presence of a God in all the parts of our recovery and salvation. We may then see what need we have of so divine and allsufficient a reconciler as *Jesus* the Son of God, to bring us into his favour; and what need of the almighty operations of the blessed Spirit to create us anew, and to restore us to his image. And since true and proper divinity or godhead is ascribed to those two glorious persons who are employed in this work, our hopes hereby have a surer refuge, and our faith a more immediate and divine foundation. It is quite contrary to our duty and our interest, to change such a saviour, and such a sanctifier, for any meaner beings which men may be tempted to put into these sacred offices, since the great and blessed God, subsisting in three persons, is pleased to undertake them, in various forms of condescension.

To conclude, let us with humble faith read and believe this glorious doctrine of the christian trinity, so far as it is declared in the holy scripture: Let us adore God the Father, as the author of all our mercies and our hopes. Let us trust in *Jesus Christ* his Son with a divine faith, as our allsufficient Saviour, and obey him as our sovereign Lord. Let us wait for and seek the almighty and divine influences of the blessed Spirit to enlighten, to sanctify and to comfort us, and to carry us onward in our way to heaven. Let us be constant and zealous in paying these divine honours to the sacred three, which the word of God hath appointed, and upon which scripture hath taught us to expect eternal life: And then if God be faithful, and his gospel true, eternal life shall be our portion in the other world, though we know not how to explain all divine mysteries in this.

Now to the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, three persons and one God, be all honour and glory, and everlasting praise, amen.

D I S S E R.