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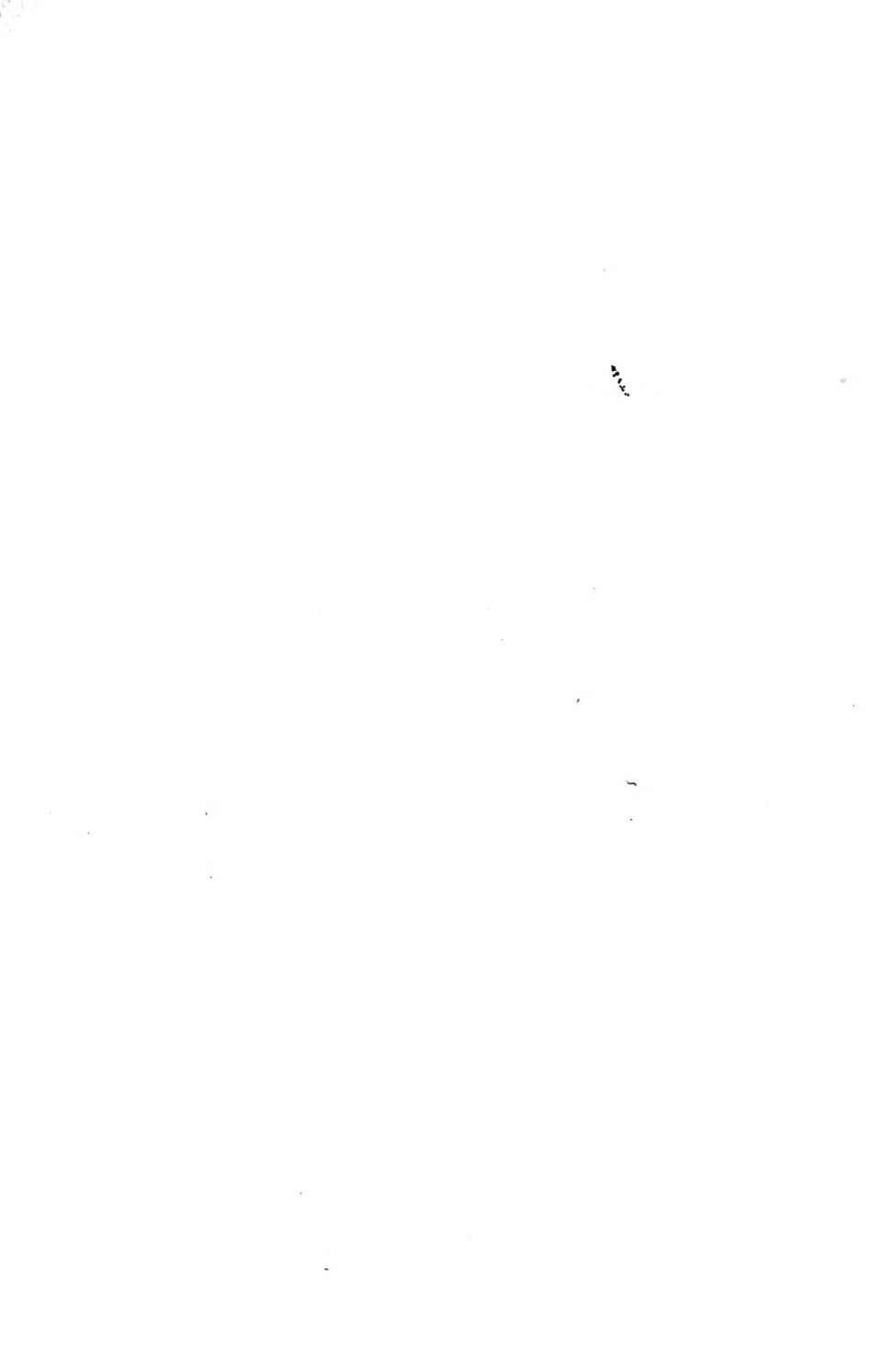
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COLLECTION OF PURITAN AND
ENGLISH THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE



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THE
NAKED GOSPEL.

DISCOVERING

- I. What was the Gospel which our LORD and His Apostles Preached.
- II. What Additions and Alterations latter Ages have made in it.
- III. What Advantages and Damages have there-upon ensued.

PART I. *Of FAITH.*

*By a True Son of the Church of England.
Arthur Bury D.D.*



Thomas Foxe, His Booke^s lost ⁴⁻⁵ 2:6

1706

P R E F A C E.

THAT the Gospel, which at its first appearance in the World made such great and speedy Conquests over its opposite Powers, should in these latter Ages be so far from making such large strides, yea, or the least step of further progress, that it hath been driven out of many of the Provinces it had gained; this is by Some objected against the Providence of God, and the Truth of the Gospel, and by the Best lookt upon with wonder.

Time was, when the Fathers and Apologists of the Christian Churches pleaded This for an Evidence of our Lord's being the true Messiah, that in him the Promise was fulfilled, which gave him the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And particularly St. Augustine thus argued for the Truth of his Resurrection, the Corner-stone of the Christian Faith: The same Spirit of God which foretold the Resurrection of Christ, foretold also, that the Doctrine thereof should be publicly professed and believed in the World: and One was altogether as unlikely as the Other: but the Latter we see in all Ages since Christ's Death accomplished, why then should we doubt of the Former?

And if we duly consider how incredible it was, that a poor, despised, persecuted, and at last crucified vagabond, should by the preaching of a few Fishermen, so prevail over the opposite Powers of the World, that the greatest Princes should place his Cross above their Crowns as their best Ornament and protection; This singly considered, must claim a belief, that as it is marvellous in our eyes, so it was the Lord's doing. If from the Power of the Sword we pass to that of the Pen, and consider, that Twelve ignorant Fishermen baffled the celebrated Learning of the Scribes among the Jews, and the Philosophers among the Greeks; These Triumphs of the Ignorant over the Learned, will appear no less admirable than those of the Poor over Princes: And when to this doubly wonderful Event, we add the no less wonderful Prediction, which at the time of its publication must appear no less Mad than now Miraculous; it must seem equally incredible that this course of so many wonders, should be the effect of less than Divine Power and Wisdom: and consequently Such a Prophecy So fulfilled, must evidence the Author to be what he declared himself, the Son of God.

YET should one of Mahomet's Priests now mount the same Chair, might he not with (at least) the same Force, press the same Argument in behalf of that lewd Impostor? Might he not argue, that the wonderful Progress of the Gospel was indeed a powerful Evidence of its Divine Authority; but withal it must be an equally powerful one for that of the Alcoran. For as the miraculous Victories of a fugitive people over the Canaanites, join'd with the Prophecies which foretold them, were a good Evidence of the Divine Authority of Moses and his Laws; and the Victories of the Gospel over that Law, were an Evidence of the greater Authority of the Gospel; so the Victories of the Alcoran over that Gospel, must be an Evidence, that as the Religion of Moses was better than that of the Canaanites, and the Religion of Christ better than that of Moses; so must the Religion of Mahomet be better than that of Christ.

Thus may a Mahometan either disarm us of St. Augustin's Argument, or Retort it against us: For either it is of no force at all, or of so much more force for Mahomet, by how much more he hath prevailed over the Churches of Christ.

AND that it is of no force at all, some may infer from the contrary conducts of the Planters of those Two Religions: For the Gospel shed no Blood but of its own Professors; kindled no Fires but those that devoured its own Martyrs; dethroned no Prince but the Prince of the Power of the Air, nor Him neither by any other Weapons but Preaching and Suffering: Whereas Mahomet and his Followers propagated his Doctrines, together with their Dominions, by Fire and Sword: And since this latter way is no less contrary to the Nature of God, than to the Precepts, as well as the way of Planting of the Gospel; since its Author was no other than a lewd brainsick Scoundrel, and his Doctrines (as far as they are His) no better than extravagant Whimsies, or lewd Panders to Lust; Such a Progress of Such a Religion, is so far from an Argument of its Divine Authority, that it is far less impious to impute its Prosperity, either to meer Chance, or (as some Astrological Fancies do) to the motion of the Heavens, (carrying Religion and Learning from the Eastern to the Western Regions of the World,) than to accuse God's Providence of Injustice to his Truth, and the Souls of the Inhabitants of so great a part of Christendom.

By such Discourses do some plead, not only against the Christian, but All Religion: And those who dare not thus Arraign or Reneg God's Providence, cannot avoid admiring its Conduct, as no less contrary to that loving Kindness which the Gospel proclaims, than to the means whereby it was first planted.

BUT if on the other side the Modern Gospel differ as much from the Primitive in its Doctrines, as it doth in its Successes; If it be so changed, that were any Apostle to return into the world, he would be so far from Owning, that he would not be able to Understand it; the Change of God's Providence in such a Change of the Gospel, will be so far from Invalidating, that it will Double the force of St. Augustin's Argument.

For it proceeded not upon the single Topick of Prosperity, but upon the concurrence of an admirable Event, with an admirable Prophecy; and its strength is now doubled by the addition of another like concurrence of a contrary Event, with a contrary Prediction: So it is thus unhappily improved, The same Spirit of God which foretold, that the Gospel should be preached over the whole world, and performed it by the Ministry of a few Fishermen; foretold also to one of the first-born Churches, and thereby to all others, that if she repented not, he would remove her Candlestick out of its place; and this was at that time no less unlikely, than it had been that ever it should be placed there; yet this we see done, and that by a quite contrary Ministry: by the Sword of a base Slave and his few Followers, and by Doctrines as weak as that Sword when first unsheathed, and lewd as those Rogues that managed it; how then can we doubt, but the One as well as the Other were ordered by the same Providence which foretold them?

If we yet doubt, let us consider particulars. First, the Spirit did not threaten to Extinguish the Light, but only to remove the Candlestick out of its place; and accordingly, the Light is not quite Extinguished but only Removed; the Gospel hath not Lost ground, but Exchanged; for America amply repaireth the Losses sustained in Europe, Asia and Africk.

Again, it is observable, that the Candlestick was thus removed by the light of its own Candle; For whereas the Western Churches were terribly overrun by a multitude of Heathen Nations, their Religion as certainly prevailed over the Minds of the Conquerors, as the Invader's Sword did over their Country; the Religion of Mahomet, on the contrary, ever kept pace with his and his Followers Swords, and where it subdued the Country, was sure to vanquish the Gospel. If we examine the Reason of this Difference, we shall find, that the Idolatry of the Heathen could not withstand the Power of the Gospel, because it had nothing of its Light; but Mahomet professed all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and declared

himself not an Apostate, but Reformer; pretending to purify it from the Corruptions wherewith it had been defiled, and perfect it with Additionals, he framed such a Jargon as appeared most serviceable to his Ends, and most suitable to his Lusts.

So, from the prosperity of the Alcoran, we have an Argument for the Divinity of the Gospel, as invincible against all power but what was derived from it self; and for the Justice of God's Providence, which as it found Corruptions in the Churches of Christ, sufficient to provoke his Judgments; so did it truth enough in the Alcoran, to prefer That above all other Religions, to the Honour of his Sword.

WHETHER Mahomet, or Christian Doctors have more corrupted the Gospel, is not so plain by the light of Scripture, as it is by that of Experience, that the Latter gave Occasion, Encouragement, and Advantage to the Former. For when by nice and hot disputes (especially concerning the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity) the minds of the whole people had been long confounded, and by the then late Establishment of Image-worship, the scandal was encreased; so that to Vulgar Understandings the Doctrine of the Trinity appeared no less guilty of Polytheism, than that of Image-worship did of Idolatry; wher by mutual uncharitableness either party persecuted the other, both with spiritual and temporal Weapons; when thus all mens minds were perplexed with doubts, and scared with threats, so that they knew not What they were to Believe; and thereby so diverted from true Piety, that they cared not How they Lived; Then was there a tempting opportunity offered to the Impostor, and he laid hold on it, to set up himself for a Reformer of such Corruptions, as were both too Gross to be justified, and too Visible to be denied.

This well considered, will admonish us to turn our complaints from God's Providence to those second causes; which as they provoked our Lord to divorce himself from his Churches, so did they Encourage and Impower the False Prophet to seduce and ruine them.

LET us therefore now proceed to compare the Primitive Gospel with the Modern, not by Retail in Particular Doctrines, (which were a work too great for the Longest and Busiest Life,) but by the Great, in General, whence the Particulars proceeded: For if it appear that our Lord's and his Apostles teaching, were both for Matter and Manner, apt to Prevail; but what hath since been added, be apt only to perplex or worse; then ought we to impute the decay of the Christian Religion, not to any defect of God's Providence, because it doth not change the Nature of things, but to those who have perverted the Gospel.

Let us then with consider (what is most worthy our consideration) that the Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached, in the way wherein they

they preached it, was suitable to the meanest Capacities, and agreeable to the Light of Nature; Easy to be understood by the Weakest, and worthy to be embraced by the Wisest.

When the Baptist sent two of his Disciples saying, Art thou he that should come or do we look for another? Our Lord gave not his answer by one word, Positive or Negative, but by several signs, whereby the Baptist might spell out his mind; and among them he put in preaching of the Gospel to the Poor, equal to his greatest miracles; and we must have very odd conceits of his wisdom, if he suted not his Teaching to the Capacities of his hearers, that the one might be as plain as the other. As he chose the Poor for his Disciples, so did he afterward for his Apostles; and whereas, to prevent the scandal that might thence arise, he added to their Society a chosen vessel, no less eminent in Learning, than They were in Simplicity; This great man of Christ professed it both his Duty and his Practice, to imitate That man of God, that shrank his full grown limbs, to the little ones of the child, which he was to raise to life: That it was his Duty he declareth 1 Cor. 1. 17. Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words: And that it was his Practice Ch. 2. 13. We speak not the words which mans wisdom teacheth, but which the holy Ghost teacheth $\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\mu\alpha\tau\eta\delta\ \alpha\nu\delta\iota\alpha\mu\alpha\tau\eta\kappa\omega\delta\ \sigma\upsilon\gamma\chi\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\tau\epsilon\varsigma$, suiting spiritual words to spiritual things, and both to spiritual persons.

And upon this account he glorieth, 2 Cor. 4. 4. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine into them. The light of the Gospel is like that of the Sun, most Powerful, as most Beautiful, when most Naked; and he had not clouded it with any of his human learning, but preached it with such plainness, that if it prevailed not, the fault must lie not in the Obscurity of his Doctrines, but in the Cataracts which had not only dimm'd, but blinded the eyes of unbelievers.

But this Plainness which he Gloried in, some Others Despised; they disdain'd this Nakedness as Poverty, this Simplicity they derided as Ignorance. The Gnosticks boasted more Knowledge, and rivaled the Apostles under pretence of discovering greater Mysteries, so to draw disciples from the plain preaching ministers of a simple Gospel.

Of these Rivals did he no less complain, than of all other Persecutors: and of the Corinthians he was the more jealous, because they were a people rich, idle, and learned: And this he declareth 2 Cor 11. 3. Their City, was for it's pleasures and plenty, like Paradise: It's Inhabitants, for

lignifiveness after knowledge, like Eve: the Gnosticks, in their insinuations, like the Serpent: and he feared lest the success should continue the parallel; by corrupting their minds from the simplicity which is in Christ: whether he meant Simplicity of Mind, requisite to a Believer, or simplicity of Doctrine to be believed; Either of these were a mischief worthy to be feared: Simplicity of mind is it's beauty, as was Eve's Nakedness in her Innocency: and Simplicity of Doctrine is the Glory of the Gospel, as is the nakedness of the Sun in it's brightness: He feared lest they should by the insinuations of the Gnosticks be ashamed of the Former, and thereby the Later should degenerate from a pleasant fruitful Garden, to a Boscaige of Fruitless Entangling Doctrines. He goeth on, and declareth that the Gnostick mode of dressing the Gospel in new doctrines, did not Adorn but Disguise it, so as to make it appear quite another thing: If he that cometh preach another Jesus whom we have not preached, or ye receive another Spirit which ye have not received, or another Gospel which ye have not accepted, (what then?) you might well bear with Him, saith our Translation, without any warrant from the Apostle's Words, and in plain defiance to his Design; for his discourse plainly dissuadeth them from it: and therefore whereas the Greek expresseth not the Person to be born with; Reason requireth we should understand it, not of the Seducers, but of Himself, who impleadeth them: And could we read the words interrogatorily (could you well bear with him?) this would render them, both more pungent, and more consonant to what he writeth Gal. 1. 6. &c. It is Another Gospel, yet it is Not Another: Not another, because the first truths are retained; yet it is Another, because perverted by Innovations. If there be something preached $\pi\alpha\rho\ \delta\epsilon$, Besides or Beyond what himself had preached, the additions make it Another.

And see to what Height he carrieth the Supposition! and with what Heat he condemneth it! If we, or an Angel from heaven preach any other gospel than what you have received (what then? let him be Rejected, or Despised? yea) let him be Accursed: Nor thus satisfied, he repeateth it again: What I have said, that I say again. If &c. From this zeal of the Apostle thus Denouncing, yea thus Inculcating, so severe a censure, we are invited to observe.

1. It is possible the Gospel may be so Disguised by innovations, that though it still retain it's genuine principles, yet it may appear Another.

2. It is possible such innovations may be so obvious, that the People may discover them.

3. Those who depart from such innovators, are not schismatics, but faithful Believers.

4. Be the Innovators never so high in Authority, we must be so far from paying them Implicit Faith, that we must not pay them ordinary Charity, but hold them Accursed

And lest Bishops might think their office called them to such studies, he cautioneth both Timothy and Titus against them; as no less Foolish than Mischievous. So careful was this great Apostle to arm both Pastors and People against the Gnosticks insinuations. But with what success?

The Serpent's voice prevaileth against all Precepts, the People run counter to the Apostle's Warnings, and the Priests to his Example: Those heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and these heap up Doctrines to scratch that itch: gently at first, Gratifying their Curiosity; but afterward rudely Tormenting their Conscience: The peoples hunger in time turned to a Surfeit, and the Priests still cram'd them with Doctrines which they could not swallow or digest; so Many in numbers that an ordinary memory cannot retain them; so Perplexed in matter, that the best understanding cannot comprehend them; so Impertinent to any good purpose, that a good man need not regard them; and so Unmentioned in Scripture, that none but the greatest subtilty can therein discover the least intimations of them. No sentence, hardly any word in the New Testament escapeth the Rack, that they may be forced to confess what they never thought of: They are put to many Questions, and every Question is stretched by many Articles, and every Article vex'd with many Objections; and all this in a New Rude Language unknown to any civil nation.

And to what purpose all this? That by the Difficulties and Dryness of such a study, free and generous minds may quit it, Monks engross it, and an Infalible Chair be established, to determine doubts, of no other use but to make work for the Oracle

THAT we may therefore be just to our Lord's Providence and Gospel, we must take to our selves both the Warning, which we have found the Apostle gave to the Corinthians; and the Encouragement which he gave to the Galatians: The Former will admonish us to Retrieve the Simplicity, from which mens minds have been so Much and so Long corrupted: The Later will embolden us to Censure those (whoever they be) that have been the Seducers; and that we may not be dazzled by any reverence toward their Characters, we must remember that he mounteth them above any supposition that can reach our case.

Had he only said in General (however Comprehensive) words, that we must not be awed by the Greatest human authority; this (however

Ample and Absolute) would have appeared a Cold encouragement, in comparison of such an express naming, not only of the greatest that can be supposed, but greater than can be Imagined.

No King is more independent in his own Dominions from any forein jurisdiction in matters Civil, than every Christian is within his own Mind in matters of Faith: and none can be so secure of any other's Faithfulness to his Soul, as every man may be of his own: the advice therefore which the best of Kings gave to the Heir of his Crowns, doth no less concern every one that hath a Soul to save.

Above all (said the incomparable King Charles I. in his Paper to the Prince) I would have you, as I hope you are already, well grounded and settled in your Religion, the best profession whereof I have ever esteemed that of the Church of England, in which you have been educated: yet I would have your own Judgment and Reason now seal to that sacred bond which education hath written, that it may be judiciously your own Religion, and not other mens Customs or Tradition which you profess.

To seal to any bond which education may have written, were to profess other mens Tradition, which in the Blessed Kings judgment is an unworthy baseness: that the Prince might in this Particular worthily do it, was by consequence on the excellency of the Church wherein he had been educated; which though Happy for Him, is Accidental as to the Generality of mankind. This very advice therefore requireth another step, to examin That very Church wherein we have been educated, that we may not put our Souls into a Lottery, wherein are many Bad draughts for one Good: for so we cannot possibly be Judicious in a right choice; and it is great odds, but we shall be Unhappy in an evil Lot.

The Church of England as it Needs not, so it Does not, forbid any of it's sons the use of their own eyes: if it did, This alone would be sufficient reason, not only to Distrust, but Condemn it.

Our great care must be, that we act no less Sincerely than Courageously in this great affair, which we cannot better manage than by these necessary enquiries.

1. What was That Gospel, which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary to be believed?

2. What Alterations or Additions have after-ages made in it?

3. What Advantage or Damage hath thereupon ensued?

C H A P. I.

Qu. I. *What was that Gospel which our Lord and his Apostles preached as necessary for Salvation.*

TΙ ὅτι τὸ παιδᾶδεῖν ; μανθάνειν τὰς φυσικὰς ἀρετὰς ἐφαρμόζεν ἢ ὅτι μέγας ἴσως καταλλῶς τῇ φύσει. *What is Learning or Instruction, but application of Generals to Particulars in a natural way?* saith *Arrian* upon *Epicætetus* ; laying it as a Fundamental rule whereon we must build, and whereby we must regulate all our opinions in point of Manners. And it will as well hold in all other Arts and Sciences : *Euclid* buildeth all his Geometry upon such principles as he calleth *στοιχεῖα*, because by that A. B. C. he spelleth out all his demonstrations of Propositions and Solutions of Problems. And by the same rule must we proceed in the judgment we are to make of the Religion we profess : for thus only shall we gain a Test whereby we may understand what is true Gospel.

That we may be secure in our search for such a Test, we must consult no other but the sacred Oracles, which give us both Character and Account of the Gospel : by the former we understand the Nature ; by the latter, the number of its Doctrines.

The Character whereby we are to judge of the Nature of the Gospel, is sometime that of a *Covenant* ; oftner that of a *Message*.

1. Sometimes it is set forth as a **C O V E N A N T**, either to secure us of the Performance on God's part ; because if he should violate it, he must break not only a Promise given, but a *Covenant* stablished ; or else in opposition to a *Former Covenant*, which it is to succeed ; and under this Character we find it prophesied of *Jer.* 31. 33. which Prophecy is applied, *Heb.* 8. 8. *Behold, the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ; Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt ; because they continued not in my Covenant, and I regarded*

them not, saith the Lord. For this is the Covenant, &c. and more succinctly, ch. 10. v. 17. This is the Covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

So the New Covenant is opposed to the Old. 1. Negatively, *not like the former*, which was no less difficult to be understood, than to be performed ; and 2. Positively, the same which their own Hearts craved, and which were so legibly imprinted in the most ignorant mind, that every one without any instructor might read and understand.

It perfected the Old, as in a good *Picture*, the Last lively colours do the First dead ones ; which they so deface, as to justify : But the Law of Nature it perfecteth, as a *Building* doth its Foundation, which it so leaneth on, as to keep it firm in its place. For whatever natural Religion could speak in behalf of Vertue, the Gospel so confirmeth, as to build it higher, with nobler Precepts and richer Promises : As therefore as it is a *New Covenant*, it is also a better one, and deserveth the other and better Character. For

2. More frequently 'tis set forth as a **M E S S A G E**. This the word literally importeth and under this Title we find it most pompously proclaimed by *S. John*, in his entry on his first Epistle wherein having studiously recommended it to our confidence by its certainty, and to our appetites by its happiness, he proceedeth to publish its design to be no other than the advancement of Primitive, Natural Religion, to a higher perfection : *These things we write to you that you may have fellowship, &c.* The Patriarchs knew only the Father, but our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son. As therefore in the face of Jesus Christ we see more of the Father's goodness, so are we thereby obliged to higher strains of love to him and one another, which is the sum of Natural Religion. The

The same in a gaye dress we have in the next verse; *These things we write unto you that your joy may be full.* Natural Religion taught men to worship God with Feasts: and by this Argument principally doth *Plutarch* prove the Joys of the Religious to be greater than those of the Epicurean; because the one tasteth nothing but the Wine and Viands, but the other rejoiceth in God, then and there especially present and propitious. And by this Argument must the Joy of a Christian be greater than that of a Philosopher; because the one can have no other assurance of God's propitioulness, but what he can borrow from his Reason; whereas the other hath it by Revelation: For in the *new Covenant* above-recited, is a promise of mercy in forgiveness of sins; and in the Gospel this is more plainly expressed, so that our *St. John* maketh it a point of faithfulness in God to perform it: And whereas death is the wages of sin, eternal life must be the consequence of its pardon, which also in the Gospel is expressly promised; so what the Philosophers strongly wished and faintly hoped, the Christian is secure of, and thereby his joy is full in that part where theirs was thirly.

Having thus endeared and published the gracious *Design* of his message, he proceedeth to deliver its joyful *Matter*: *This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* A glorious, but a dazzling Word! whereby yet we understand this plain truth, that God is most perfect, and it is the design of the Gospel to invite us to be such as he is; which also *St. Peter* verifieth, saying, *For this purpose are given us many rich and precious Promises, that by them we should be partakers of the divine nature*: than which words none can more clearly declare that the design of the Gospel, is so to deliver us from the discipline of the Ceremonial Law, as to exalt us to the highest Perfection in the Natural, by making us *Perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

And if this be the *Design*, this the *Matter* of the Gospel, then have we an Authentick General Test, whereby every Doctrine must be tried, that claimeth our entertainment as a Gospel Truth. For every wise Agent valueth the Means by their serviceableness to the end, and Particulars by their suitability to the Generals: If to these we find any Doctrines serviceable, we must embrace them; if impertinent, we must slight them; if pernicious we must condemn them.

With this Test then in our hands, as we safely may, so we boldly shall pursue our Enquiries.

The First is, *What was the Gospel which our Saviour and his Apostles preached?*

This Enquiry plainly concerneth matter of Fact, and therefore cannot employ any Logick, Metaphysicks, or any other Scholastick Arts, cannot need subtilty of judgment, or cunning in dispute, or any other qualification of mind, but care and honesty; nor again doth it put us to tumble great or many Books, yea or so much as one System, saith no more than our Lord did to him that enquired, *what he should do to be saved?* Our Lord sent him to his Bible, *what is written in the Law? how readest thou.* We have a faithful record of whatever can pretend to be Gospel, and sufficient to answer the like question *what shall I believe to be saved?*

In its largest Edition the Gospel, truly so called, exceedeth not Two Doctrines: *St. Mark* saith, *Our Saviour came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, saying, the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, REPENT and BELIEVE the Gospel*: By which if it be not sufficiently plain, that the Gospel is comprised in Repentance and Faith, *Saint Paul* putteth it beyond dispute: For in his farewell discourse with the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus* he thus justifieth himself, *I have not kept back any thing from you that was profitable for you, but preached unto you REPENTANCE toward God, and FAITH toward our Lord Jesus*

Jesus Christ. No words can more expressly declare that in these two are contained, not only all things *Necessary*, but all things *Profitable* : And those who so importunately call for another catalogue of fundamentals, must impeach the Apostle either of gross Ignorance or a grosser Lye.

Yea, the Holy Ghost seemeth so to shun multiplication of necessaries, that in other places it thinketh Two too many, and therefore reduceth them to One; and to either of the Two. For in our Lord's first Sermon, as recited by St. *Matthew*, we find no mention of Repentance, but only of Faith: And so his last Sermon agreeth with his first, for therein he professeth this to be the design of his death and resurrection, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.*

Yet is Faith also in its turn honoured with the same dignity, as the sole and adequate substance of the Gospel: Our Lord himself told *Nicodemus*, that *God sent him into the world, that whatsoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And St. *John* closeth his Gospel with this saying, *These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name.*

So far is our Lord from thinking his Gospel honoured by multiplication of Articles, that rather than keep up that least of numbers, he is content to dismiss either of the two.

That in this he may not appear to contradict himself, we must consider, that they are both the same under different aspects, and in their comprehensive latitude either containeth the other : For to Believe includeth Repentance, as a condition of

obtaining that Remission, which without Faith it could not pretend to, nor labour for : And Repentance includeth Faith, because it is performed in confidence of the promise, that God for Christ's sake will pardon the penitent.

Because therefore they have their several aspects and definitions, upon the distinct views whereof, they may be both of them more clearly apprehended, therefore will we handle them as the two Tables of the new Covenant, so joined as to be several. When display'd they appear Two, Faith, and Repentance; when closed, they appear but One; and That side which is next the eye denominateth the whole, sometime Faith, sometime Repentance. Yes! the whole new Covenant is written by our Lord's own finger in these two Tables; and the positive Rites which he appointed, thereby to engage us to profess our selves his Disciples, are not Parts of his Covenant, but Badges of his Followers, and Acknowledgments of their homage to his Person. Those Rituals we shall not neglect, but first must do justice to the Covenant in its Substance; and we shall endeavour to do it with all possible simplicity, with such plainness as may instruct every Honest Reader; and Convince every Obstinate: Provided they have not so utterly abandoned all their faculties, as to become contradictions to themselves, which they must be, if they want both Courage and Fear; Courage to denounce the Anathema which the Apostle hath commissioned them to cast against the greatest human authority, if it bring *another Gospel*; and Fear to offend against our Lord's command, not to *call any one Master upon earth.*

C H A P. II.

Of FAITH, *In what sence it justifieth?*

WE begin with Faith upon two contrary accounts: 1. Because it is so unhappy, as to be the occasion of the Gnosticism which so much troubled S. Paul, by corrupting disciples minds from the simplicity which is in Christ; and 2. Because it is so happy, as to be honoured by our Lord and his Apostles, as the sole condition for our Salvation. For as St. Paul declareth, that we are justified by Faith without works; so our Lord (who doubtless knew his own errand) telleth Nicodemus, *God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son into it, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.*

What can be fuller or clearer? The Benefit is proclaimed under a double character, to double its certainty, Negative, *shall not perish*; and Positive, *shall have everlasting life*: The Promise is Universal, to *whosoever believeth*, and Free from all other condition but believing. If this seem incredible, the wonder is cured by another no less incredible, *God sent his only begotten Son into the world on purpose*; yet both the one and the other are made credible by the wonderful reason assigned, *God so loved the world*. And now, what need of the impertinent trouble of Repentance? Why should we run the smarting ganelope of Mortification, crossing our Appetites, and afflicting our Souls?

Thus do some dash the two Tables of the new Covenant against each other, and make the Gospel an enemy to its own great design, which we have found to be the advancement of Natural Religion.

The first service therefore that we can reasonably do to Faith, must be to rescue it from so great a mischief, by reconcil-

ing our Lord's absolute Promise of *eternal life to whosoever believeth*, with his no less absolute Threat, that *except we repent we shall all perish*. And this will easily be done by these two Propositions.

1. *All Promises, however absolute in words, must be understood with implication of all things necessary to be supposed.*

2. *In our Lord's absolute Promise of eternal life to all Believers, repentance is necessary to be supposed.*

1. *All Promises include a tacit supposal of all things necessary to be supposed.* It is impossible, at least very Troublesome, and equally Needless, that whoever maketh a promise should explicitly reckon up all such conditions, as by their own light are visible, and therefore Need not; and by their Multitude Innumerable, and therefore cannot be particularly expressed: Reason therefore, and Necessity, and the joyned Practice of all mankind, have concurred in the rule, that whatever is necessary in its own nature to be Supposed, is to be taken as necessarily Implied; and accordingly in every Promise are tacitly implied such Plain, though unmentioned Reservations.

2. *Repentance and Holiness of life are necessary to be supposed.* This appeareth both from the nature of the thing, and the express declarations of the Author of the Promise.

From the Nature of the thing. The Law of Nature is written in the heart by the hand of God, as a transcript of his own nature, and must be, like its Original, immortal: The Gospel came not to deface it, but to make it more legible; to new write it upon our Understandings, with clearer glosses; upon our Reason, with brighter arguments; upon our Affections, with nobler motives; upon our Hopes,

Hopes, with higher encouragements; and upon our Beliefs, with plainer Promises. And should our Lord, upon any account whatsoever, promise impunity to sin; this would turn him from a *Saviour* to a *Tempter*: *You shall not die*, was the voice of the Serpent; and while the Sons of *Eve* have the same licentiousness after forbidden pleasures, the same promise (if believed) must have the same success. To promise impunity in a pleasant evil, is to invite to its enjoyment. Far be this from our Lord, who was so careful to preserve us from so great a danger, that he did not leave us to the general nature of all Promises, but clearly and frequently warned us against such a mistake. He openly declared, that some would not only plead their Faith, but its Fruits; *Preaching in his name, casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful works*, are plain evidences of true faith; yet even to such, he will say, *depart from me, I know you not*, when he knows them too well, to own them, because *workers of iniquity*.

And that Repentance may not complain as less honoured, he preferreth it to the same dignity: for in his last Sermon to his Apostles, he saith no less for it than he had done for Faith, *Thus it is written, and thus it becometh Christ to suffer and to rise again*, and that *Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*; but to what purpose should repentance be preached in his name, who had promised everlasting life without it?

That we may be the more secure of a rule so important, let us see how it's confirmed by an example so opposite, that it looketh more like an illustration framed on purpose, than a true history, *Act. 27. 18.*

We were in the same danger of Eternal death, as *St. Paul* and his company were of Temporal, and our deliverance is no less like, than was the danger: *Paul* promised, *there shall not be loss of any man's life*; yet when the Mariners would have stolen

away, he said to the Centurion, *except these abide in the Ship we cannot be saved.*

What now can the *Antinomian* plead, which this example doth not answer? What difficulty is there in the doctrine of Justification by Faith, which it doth not clear? Did Christ absolutely and universally promise, that *whosoever believeth in him shall not perish*? So did his Apostle absolutely and universally promise, that *no man's life should be lost*: Is Justification freely promised for *Christ's sake*? so was deliverance freely promised for *Paul's sake*. Did God send his Son to publish this promise? so did he send his Angel to *St. Paul*: Are our best works insufficient to justify us? so was the best skill of the Mariners to deliver the Voyagers. Yet unless the Mariners abide in the Ship, none of the Company can escape; and unless Holiness abide in our lives, we must perish. If therefore any under pretence of casting anchor upon Christ's promise, steal away from repentance, we must have recourse to our rule, as *St. Paul* had to the Centurion; and the necessity of Holiness will perform the same office as the Soldiers did, cut asunder their pretences, and let their hopes fall off.

In this rule there is nothing doubtful but this, whether it be more Obvious, or Neglected, or Important?

So Important, that it will clear all the difficulties which swell so many Volumes with questions concerning *Justification*, and the *Covenant of Grace*. Papists will not be able to quarrel with us, when we say with *St. Paul*, *By Faith we are justified*; nor will the *Antinomians* be able to accuse us as enemies of *free Grace*, when we say with *St. James*, *we are justified by works*.

It is so Obvious and simple, that it will easily avoid the impertinent niceties of Disputers, whether it be an Assent, or Reliance, or Recumbency? whether it justify as an Instrument, or a Condition? by the Act, or the Habit? Before Sanctification,

or after it? &c. We no sooner reconcile St. Paul with himself, his Absolute Promise of deliverance with his Protestation, that without the Mariners stay they must perish; but we thence learn how to reconcile him with St. James; free Grace, with Conditions required; the Insufficiency of good Works, with their Necessity; Justification by Works, upon account of Natural Religion; with Justification by Faith, upon account of the Gospel.

Yet it is so Neglected, that among those many Treatises that have been published, concerning the New Covenant and Justification, I know not of one that hath honoured it with so much as a mention.

Yea, it is worthy our consideration upon another account; it may silence, not only the Antinomian, in his opposition to good Works, but the Gnosstick too, in his humour of disputing. For pray consider; would it not have been wonderous wisely done, if in time of such danger, and upon such warning, the Souldiers, instead of hastening to secure the Mariners, and their own lives, should have trifled away their precious time in disputing to which of the two they must owe their lives? to the Apostle, because God had given them to him; or to the Mariners, because he had declared they could not escape without them? For God's sake, let us hasten to put our Souls out of danger; when that is done, and we are safe at land, if we can there find no better employment, nor greater pleasure, than to play at cross purposes, we may think how to oppose, and then to reconcile St. Paul and St. James.

The case (you may say) is very unlike: St. Paul was a chosen vessel, and a stout Champion for the Gospel; He was not behind the very chiefest of the Apostles, but laboured and suffered more than they all. This very voyage was but part of a danger, which carried him to a greater for the Gospel's sake: And it was but just that his Lord, for

whose sake he was engaged in the storm should deliver him from it; and the extent of the favour to all his companions, though in Justice it were not due, might very congruously be granted in Kindness to so great a Saint, and under such circumstances. *But what are the great merits of faith which may any way entitle it to so great a reward as everlasting life? Whatever can pretend to worth, must make its claim good, by shewing how it partaketh the nature of God, who is the first good: but to be Credulous, is so far from the power of Divine life, that it is a plain confession of Weakness; it is nothing else but Learning upon another, for want of knowledge of its own: The simple believeth every word, but a wise man looketh well to his going, said the wisest of all mere men. And experience telleth us, that Children and Dotards, Women and Fools, the Sick and the Ignorant, are most easie; and by how much any man is wiser, by so much he is wariier, that he be not imposed upon. Had it any worth, we should have heard of it in Moses or the Prophets; and the Philosophers would have allowed it a place among the Virtues: Whereas on the contrary, Philosophers reckon Credulity among the Vices, and the Old Testament mentioneth it but once or twice, and that not by way of Precept, but occasionally. And what reward can it possibly deserve? If I believe, either I do it upon good reason, or not; If I see good reason for my belief, I cannot deserve Reward, because no man can chuse, but must Necessarily believe, as far as Reason requires: If I believe without reason, then I am a Fool, and so far from deserving a Reward, that I deserve Blame. And if it seem hard to justify our Lord's Wisdom, in promising so great a Reward to a performance that deserveth none at all; it will appear no less so, to justify his Goodness, in imposing such a task no less Difficult than Worthless: For whereas no small part of the good tidings of the Gospel, is our manumission from the bondage of Moses's Law; the yoke of Christ will seem the harder of the*

1700. *It is easier for a rich man to sacrifice whole Hecatombs, when he hath wealth enough to purchase them, than to pull out his eyes, yet can any man easier pull out the eye of his Body than his Reason, which is not only the eye, but the heart; for it is his very Definition, without which he cannot be a Man: It is God's Image, and the Apostle exhorteth us to put on the new Man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Now that God should Print his image in our hearts, require us to Renew it; yet promise eternal life for reward if we Deface it, is a saying harder to be Believed, than all the Ceremonies of Moses's Law were to be Practised.*

This and more is objected against Faith in general; and still the more we descend to particulars, whether in the Doctrines, that are imposed as Articles of Faith; or in the dispute between That and Good works; the more will the Objections rise in force and number. For every one employeth his care against the Adversary of his opinion, with neglect of the first principles of the Gospel; and those who plead for justification by Faith, have not the gratitude to justifie Faith it self or its great Author; but leave him as an Arbitrary, Unreasonable Lawgiver, imposing Useless, Worthless commands, with the weightiest obligations.

We shall therefore endeavour by his grace to perform so Necessary and Neglected a work; and by the Plainest, Simplest, General principles of Religion and

Reason, so to assert the honour of our Lord and his Gospel, as to give a fair account both of his Wisdom and Goodness; proving his Gospel to be no less Grateful to our Reason, than gracious to our Salvation; which also will be a good healer of our breaches that are made in our minds by Doubts, or in the Church of Christ by Disputes, concerning controverted Doctrines.

For whereas it is acknowledged as a foundation in all Sciences, that we must seek truth by application of Generals to Particulars; and it is the General scope of the Gospel to advance *Natural Religion*; this is the sting of the Objection, That Faith hath no place among Virtues, but Credulity hath one among Vices: That our defence therefore may both obviate the objection, and build upon a good foundation, it shall stand upon these two pillars.

1. *Faith is a duty in Natural Religion, as a cardinal virtue.*
2. *Credulity is not Faith; but as opposite to it, as vice is to virtue.*

Both these Propositions are of Divine Authority, recommended by the Apostle, *Rom. 3. 4.* in these words, *Let God be true, but every man a liar*; so that we can say nothing but by way of explication, displaying what is wrapt up in those few divine syllables: And when we have thence discovered what figure Faith made in *Natural Religion*, we shall have gone at least half way in discovering what power is given it in the Gospel.

C H A P: I I I.

What figure FAITH made in Natural Religion.

FAITH is a duty in *Natural Religion*, a Cardinal virtue, Justice toward God, to whom it payeth what is due: To his Veracity, let God be true; to his Faithfulness, let God be just; to his Power, let God be able to perform his Promises, &c.

That this was taught by *Natural Religion* before *Moses* brought the Positive into the World, and that the Gospel buildeth upon That foundation; if any one doubt, let him but read the 4th chapter of *S. Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*, he will there find *Abraham's*

Abraham's Faith recommended to us for a Pattern, with an Explanation of the blessing he obtained by it, and who are to be heirs to it: Not the Children of his loins, but of his faith, must be heirs; those who walk in his steps, shall rest in his Bosom; and after a description of his heroical faith, the Panegyrick is closed with a declaration, *These things are written, not for Abraham's sake alone, but for ours also.*

That we may walk in his steps, it will be requisite we trace them; which if we do, we shall find large steps on either side; Great Confidence in God's Faithfulness on one side, and great Obedience to his Commands on the other; by the one he sacrificed his Reason, by the other his *Isaac*.

1. *His Confidence* in God's faithfulness was so firm, that he staggered not, but stood strong in his Belief, and proceeded in his Obedience, notwithstanding all opposite discouragements from the laws of Nature, or dictates of Reason. It was against the course of Nature, that he should have a child, when both his own and his *Sara's* bodies were no better than dead, as to power of generation; and more against the dictates of Reason, that *Isaac* should be a father after he were sacrificed: yet did not either the One or the Other seem so impossible, as that God should lye.

He knew him infinite in Wisdom, Power, and Truth; that he could some way or other, undiscovered to human eyes, perform his promises; and since no other appeared, the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* supposeth he believed, that *God was able to raise him from the dead*. And in these steps of our father *Abraham*, the Apostle exhorteth us to walk after him; but we must do it—*non passibus aequis*. For raising of the dead was a thing unheard of to *Abraham*; whereas the same Son of God, in whom we are to believe, gave us an experiment of it in his own resurrection; so that to *Abraham's* faith and ours may be

applied our Lord's words to *Thomas*, we believe after we had seen; but blessed *Abraham* had neither seen, nor heard, yet believed. Yet if we have the faith but of *Thomas*, it shall be imputed to us for righteousness; and the Apostle so speaketh, as if our Lord shewed us his Resurrection upon That very account: for he saith, *Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*; in which words though the same particle *for* be alike used in both, yet must it be as little the Apostles Meaning as our Interest, that it should import the same in both; for he so dyed for our offences, as to dye in our stead; but we cannot desire, nor could the Apostle mean, that he rose in our stead: We rejoice that our offences are taken away by his Death, but should be sorry to have our Justification taken away by his Resurrection: It is therefore plain that the Particle [*For*] is so far from the same signification in both, that the former is contrary to the latter: We are justified by his Blood, because thereby our sins are blotted out; but we are justified by his Resurrection, because thereon our Faith is built: for thereby we are convinced of the truth which we are to believe, and by that belief to be justified, as was *Abraham*. So plain it is that the Faith which the Gospel requireth had its foundation in natural Religion; and while *Abraham* is proposed as the father of the Faithful, Natural Faith is also proposed as the mother of the Evangelical. That in the Law it should never be Commanded, nor so much as recommended more than once, and that with no higher Eulogy than this, *Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*; nor by any of the Prophets, but once, and that with this short come-off, *the just shall live by his Faith*; this is no wonder at all: For whoever hath so much Religion as to believe there is a God, must believe him to be Absolutely perfect; which he could not be, if he want either Veracity or Power; and

if he be infinite in Both, it must be impossible for him to lye, or fail of performing his Promises.

This therefore needeth neither Revelation for want of Evidence, nor Precept for want of a plain Obligation: and the Old Testament must have done impertinently, if without any need it should have offered the one or the other.

Yet though the Old Testament gives us no command, it doth give us Warnings by the punishment of Unbelievers. *Sarah*, for her believing husbands sake, escaped with a gentle reprimand, though her Unbelief of the truth of God's messenger were aggravated with a double Untruth of her own: for though she laughed at the promise of a Son in her old age, and then denied that she did so laugh; yet did the Angel reprove her with no other sharpness, but that of reason, against her double fault. *Is any thing impossible with God?* was an argument drawn from Natural Religion, so forceable as to triumph over all natural causes, and stop the mouth of all other infidelity, but that of the Atheist.

But *Lor's* wife, after so manifest experience of the Power of her guests, in delivering themselves from the force of the whole City, by smiting small and great with blindness, believed not their threats to destroy the same City with fire; but turning back from behind her believing, flying husband (who's haste to save himself, and obedience to the prohibition of the Angels (*saying lock not behind thee*) hindered him from perceiving it) returning into the cursed City, there perished among her wicked neighbours, and became a *pillar of salt*, that is, in the Hebrew idiom, an everlasting Monument, of the punishment due to Unbelievers.

When to a starving City the Prophet of God promised a greater plenty the next day, than ever had been known in any; the incredulous Lord had This punishment, that he *saw it with his eyes* for the conviction of his Unbelief, but could not taste it

for the satisfaction of his Hunger: The unbelieving Israelites, who lived upon daily experience of God's power, when they distrusted his promise of victory over the tall and mighty *Canaanites*, perished in the Wilderness; and those that asked, *can God prepare a table in the wilderness?* fell under his wrath with the meat in their mouths.

The same light which sheweth us the Being of God, sheweth also his Perfections; and to give an express Law, or use any other means to perswade a Belief in him, had been the same wisdom, as to perswade me to believe the Sun shineth; which were an affront both to the Sun and me.

And thus I hope I have proved that Faith in God is a duty of Natural Religion, a moral Virtue, and to be valued for its intrinsic worth, as a *participation of the Divine Nature*, in one of God's Attributes, his Justice; and we may well proceed to consider, that besides this intrinsic worth, whereby it deserveth to be valued as self-good; it hath another worth, as a Serviceable means to all other Graces and Duties.

2. *FAITH* is a great promoter of Obedience; and where as the Old Testament seemeth silent herein, we have a whole and large Chapter in the New, ascribing all the heroical actions and suffering of the Patriarchs to This Grace; and so by a kind and postliminium asserting the right which Natural Religion had, and God might (if he had pleased) have by Law required.

And that it may be proved as clearly as asserted; an argument is offered in the entrance upon the discourse: *by Faith Enoch was translated, having received this testimony, that he pleased God; but without Faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;* which argument will receive a little light from the phrase wherein the testimony

ffimony was given, and where to the Argument refers. It is said *Gen. 5. 22. Enoch walked with God*, and now the Sorites runs thus, He that doth not walk with God cannot please God, he that doth not come to God cannot walk with God, he that doth not believe that God is, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, cannot come to him, nor will he seek after him.

After this Argument we have a muster of many achievements performed by Faith in the Patriarchs and others, among whom standeth Father *Abraham* like *Saul* among the people, taller by the head; not only than all there present, but than all that ever were or shall be: For the highest Boast of *St. John* is, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith*: but *Abraham* might boast a Victory, not only over the world, but over its Creator. For it is said *God tryed Abraham*: he did indeed, for he tryed the mastery with him: he tryed which could exceed, himself in hard Commands, or *Abraham* in absolute Obedience; and upon tryal it appears, that the victory fell to *Abraham's* Faith, which did not only Fulfil his duty, but Exceed it; perhaps in the Matter, certainly in the manner. The Matter was such, as he might have Disputed, and perhaps Disobeyed, without sin: He might possibly have pleaded *God's Promise* in bar to his Command. *God* had given him this Son, 'tis true, but with a promise annexed, that this Son, this very Son *Isaac*, should be Father of a numerous and blessed Posterity: And since this depended upon his life; whatever Right *God* might have to his Obedience, himself had a Right in *God's* Promise, which he could not be obliged to renounce. And granting that *God's* Prerogative might over-rule such a Plea; This however, cannot be denied, that Obedience, however unwilling, was the utmost which the Command could exact, and therefore

2. The Manner of his Obedience certainly exceeded his Obligation, in the Cheer-

fulness and Diligence of the performance: For though *Isaac* were endeared to him by long despair, and then by glorions promises; though he must perish not by an Ordinary or Honourable death, but that, of a Beast; though the tender Father must not Hear of this by Messengers, but must Torment his Eyes, yea Imbrue his Hands too in the cruel Butchery; though in so doing, he must offer no less violence to his Reason, than to his *Isaac*; though all this might well have Staggered, yea quite Overthrown both Faith and Obedience; yet he is so far from Staggering, that he doth not only Stand firm to his Duty, but Out-goeth it: doth not plead the scandal of so Cruel, so Inhumane, and Unnatural an action, as must make his Person and his Religion stink among his Neighbours; doth not intercede for his only Son as for *Sodom*, saying, *Shall not the God of all the world do right?* Doth not petition for him as *Moses* did for the people, that *God* would reverse his Sentence, or as *Jephtha's* Daughter did for a little time of reprieve; but without the least tergiversation, is equally Diligent and Cautious in the execution; riseth early in the morning, hideth his purpose from his Wife, lest she should hinder it, taketh with him but two Servants, and them he leaveth at such distance, as to prevent the rescue which their officiousness might make of their young Master from the seeming madness of their old, drilleth *Isaac* himself along with pretence that *God* would provide a Lamb: what could the most Tender father do more to Save the life of an only Son? *Hac est fides*, said *Nero*, when his Servant to satisfy his humour killed himself; this is such a Faith as might well be imputed to *Abraham* for righteousness, and proposed to us for a pattern; and stop the mouth of all objections which shall not think Faith worthy of *God's* acceptance, or of a place among Moral Virtues which are the Graces in Natural Religion.

And as it hath the Worth, so it hath the Unhappiness of a Virtue, beset on either side with a Vice, Defect on one side, and Excess on the other: on the One side Infirmity is the Defect, and on the Other side

Credulity is the Excess of Faith; and as usual with all Virtues, we find it reproached under the name of the Excess, whereof it is no wise guilty, as we come to consider in our second Proposition.

C H A P. IV.

Credulity is not FAITH, but an opposite Vice.

II. **C**REDULITY is not Faith, but as opposite to it as Vice is to Virtue: as Fool-hardiness is to Valour, Prodigality to Bounty, and all Excess to Prudence, which is the Soul of all Virtue whatever.

We have reduced Faith to Justice; because its proper work is to pay God the confidence due to his Veracity. And herein we seem to be out of all danger of Excess, seeing God's faithfulness is infinite: and so indeed we are, while we make our payment to the Right Object. For to God is due not only Actual belief of every word which we know him to have spoken, but an Habitual readiness to believe any other, when ever it shall appear to come from him, and all without reserve for any contradicting sense or reason.

Our only danger of excess therefore lieth in our mistake, not of the Degree but the Object; and this we incur if we pay That confidence to any creature which is due to God only.

Our excellent *Chillingworth* spake no less Modestly than Rationally, when he said, that he had often demanded of the Romanists, why *implicit Faith in our Lord*, might not as well avail for Justification, as *implicit Faith in the Church*; but could never receive an answer to so plain and important a question: It is indeed too much to be Answered, but too little to be Demanded; for it ought to be raised to a demand, how any Church dare Challenge,

or any Person dare Pay, that faith to Any, yea to all the creatures in heaven and earth, which is due to God only? This Injustice to God, for two plain Reasons.

1. It is a kind of spiritual Polytheism such a falling down and worshipping the creature, as must provoke Him who declareth himself a *jealous God*, that will not give his honour to another: *Let God be true, and every man a liar*, is a double word of God's own mouth; and he that doth not believe the Latter as well as the Former maketh God a Liar, and man a God.

2. Those who so require implicit faith in any other authority, as to contradict Reason; give God the lie, by making him contradict himself. For Reason is no less the word of God, than is the Scripture Yea Therefore, and therefore only, are we to believe whatever we find in Scripture because we are by plain Reason convinced that it is the word of God, whom we must believe in defiance to all opposition whatsoever. *The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching the innermost parts of the belly*, saith *Solomon*. The spirit is that part of our frame, wherein we are created in knowledge after the image of God: and in the *fleshy tables of our hearts* are his words written with the same finger, as were his laws in the *tables of Stone*; and therefore to say that this *Candle* contradicted the *Sun of righteousness*, is no less injurious to God than to his image and workmanship.

There is indeed in the One as in the O

her light, great difference of degrees of brightness: Some truths appear so plain, that the Weakest, yea the Sorest eye cannot avoid seeing and acknowledging them; but some are so small or so remote, that they may deceive or escape the Best. Yet must not This prejudice our belief of such great truths, as appear plain both by sunshine and candlelight, whereof the later never contradicteth the former.

Abraham's faith is our constantly serviceable pattern: It seemed utterly repugnant to plain reason, that *Isaac* should be a father of nations if he were sacrificed; but it seemed much more so, that God should be Unfaithful; and therefore, when *Abraham* believed, he did no less justice to his own Reason, than to God's Faithfulness.

To make this (if possible) yet plainer, we must distinguish between matter of Faith, and matter of Fact: Matter of Faith, is this only Proposition, that it is impossible God should lie; and to This, *Abraham* stood firm, without staggering at the seeming opposition between the Promise and the Command: But that God first made such a Promise, and then imposed such a Command, this was matter of Fact; wherein though the Scripture be silent, Reason is clamorous; shewing us, that *Abraham* was by Sufficient (though to us Unrevealed) evidences, no less Secure This way, than Confident the Other way. Else might he more justly be Blamed for dishonouring God with a thought, that he could be author of such a cruel command; than justified for his confidence in a faithfulness, which had been unconcerned.

So there must be two Measures for our belief: of the one kind is the faithfulness of the Person, in whom we believe: if God be the person, our Belief must be Infinite, because his Veracity is so; if Man be the person, our Belief must be Wary, because Man is a Liar, or at least may be suspected to be so. Of the other kind, is the evi-

dence which we have, that what is offered us for the word of God, is really such: and to this we must pay neither More nor Less belief, than Reason will prove due; provided we be still ready to pay more, as our evidence shall increase, because our Reason for belief will increase equally with such evidence. This is all that Justice can demand; and whoever payeth more, doth it in his Own wrong, and perhaps in God's too.

A sad example hereof we have in the Prophet, that by the word of the Lord came from *Juda* to *Bethel*, and to the King's face prophesied the destruction of his Altar: he obeyed a Troublesom and Hazardous Command, refused a Royal Invitation, returned homeward another way than that by which he came, and in every thing conformed to his Commission. But when an old Prophet said to him, *I am a Prophet as well as thou art, and an Angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread, and drink water*; the easie good man, believing the malicious lying one, was punished, not so properly for his Disobedience, as his Credulity. This being the rule (say the Rabbins and Reason) that when a Prophet hath received a word immediately from God, he must not believe any other than an equally immediate word of God in contradiction to it.

The example jointeth close with the case before us. Whatever we hear from clear Reason, we hear from a word of God: whoever would persuade us to disbelieve it, must produce such Credentials, as may convince us to the contrary; If he do this, Reason immediately tacketh about in conformity to the Evidence, as to another word of the same God: but if no other Credentials be offered than his own, or some other Humane (that is, Fallible or Fallacious) authority; we are no more to comply with it, than the true Prophet ought to have done with the lying one.

The end perhaps of such Credulous persons may be less dismal, they may not become the *Lions* prey; but they have already made themselves the *Asses* companions, by submitting their Understandings to the Bridle and Saddle, imposed on them by a dull mistake of Credulity toward man for Faith toward God; more obvious than that of the Fool-hardy Prodigal, or any other overdoer, that by Excess vitiateth a Virtue.

By these Plain and Vulgar Principles of Morality, we understand in Believing as we do in all other actions, what is Virtuous or Vicious, and so do we also, why so Lit-

tle hath been spoken of it by *Moses* and the Prophets, and so Much by Christ and his Apostles. The same Natural Religion which claimed it as due to God, forbid to pay it to any Creature; upon the Former account there was No need of an express precept, and upon the Latter there was the Greatest need; not only of an express Command, but such repeated Importunities, as might outvoice both Reason, when it should decry such a demand and Interest, when it should rebel against convinced Reason; both whereof concurred against the belief which our Lord required.

C H A P. V.

Why FAITH maketh a greater figure under the Gospel, than it did under the Law?

FOR our clearer view of the Reason why Faith should make so much a greater figure in the Gospel, than it did under the Law, let us parrallel *Faith* toward Christ, with *Loyalty* towards the King. *Loyalty* is a standing duty, which at all times must be paid to the King. In peaceable times, as there is no occasion for any proclamation to require it, so there is none to Promise it any Reward, but what the laws of Government promise at all times to good Subjects, protection in their just rights: But if a Prince be dethroned and banished, disabled to defend his own power and his subjects lives; if Loyalty now shall expose a good Subject to as great punishments, as in good times are the reward of rebellion; In this case, Policy for his own interests, concurrerth with Justice to a good subjects merits, to perswade the Prince, by publick proclamations and private wellages, and all other possible means, to encourage his Subjects with liberal promises, that they may find it their Interest as well as their

Duty, to imploy their endeavours in their injured Prince's behalf.

Just thus it is in the present case: Faith is a standing duty to Christ, and must be paid at all times to the end of the World. But at that time when our Lord first claimed it, and St. *Paul* spoke such great things of it, there were extraordinary reasons for the importunities and promises, wherewith it was then honoured, and the world solicited; some whereof in these days, when the Christian Religion hath been long established, have lost their influence.

Those extraordinary reasons may be reduced to three. 1. The *Difficulties* of believing. 2. The *Danger* of professing it. 3. The *Necessity* of both.

1. The *Difficulties* at first were many and great; the Command was short, but Hard: *You believe in God, believe also in me. You believe in God, you cannot avoid so doing, and the very notion of a God exacts it from you: You cannot believe there is a God without believing him to be infinite,*

s in all other perfections, so in Faithfulness; and this will require on your part suitable, *i. e.* Infinite Confidence. The same Infinite, Absolute, Implicit belief, which you thus acknowledge due to God, is also due to Me; I am come from heaven to be the light of this lower world in Spiritual things, as the Sun is in Corporal; and whatever I speak, I require you to believe with the same confidence, as you would a particular word from heaven, or a manifest object of sight enlightened by the Sun.

This at *That* time (still I say at *That* time) when our Lord put in such a claim, and his Apostles pleaded for it, appeared very Hard, because very Unreasonable command, both to Jews and Greeks; it was to the Jews a *stumbling block*, and to the Greeks Foolishness; for the Jews required a Sign, and the Greeks sought after Wisdom, and he that would believe, must run counter to the whole world: for so did the Jews object to St. Paul, *We know that this sect is every where spoken against.*

1. The Greeks sought after Wisdom, and to them such a belief seemed Foolishness. Their Wisdom, was Prudence; their Religion, Virtue: The same Religion which taught to pay God infinite belief, taught them also to measure their belief toward Man by the credibility of the Speaker, or the Word by him spoken; and whatever exceeded this measure, was foolishness.

But if Religion were no less concerned than Reason, then must Impiety joyn with Foolishness, and as it doubled the Vice, so did it the Caveat: for as all change of opinion is difficult, so is that of Religion most so. The World was never possessed by any Religion so absurd, but that education and growth gave it such roots, as would not be pluckt up with ease or a little labour; yea, most men have no other reason for their Religion but this, which equally prevails for the Worst as the Best. The Whimsies of *Mahomet* are no less confidently embraced, and zealously de-

fended and propagated, nor perhaps have they had fewer Martyrs or Confessors, than the holy Doctrines of the blessed Jesus. The Worshipers of (God's mirror) the Sun, yea of the works of mens hands in wood and stone, are no less tenacious of their Folly, than we are of the Truth: Those who worship what they eat, believe all those damned, who will not pull out their eyes and do the same. Since therefore none could believe in Christ, without renouncing the Religion whereby he was possessed; this alone made it very difficult.

And the very meanness of the Person was a mighty prejudice against so great a claim. This had no part in the trial of *Abraham's* faith: He was no less sure that he had Gods Command for sacrificing *Isaac*, than that he had his Promise for a blessed posterity from his loins: but here the great difficulty, is the credibility of the Person commanding and promising such great things: That he could give his followers Eternal Life, who could not save himself from the most Shamefull and Painful Death; that he could give the inheritance of a Kingdom, who had not where to lay his head; that the Son of a Carpenter was the Son of God; that a man of Sorrows was the Lord of Glory; these appeared such absurdities to their reason, that those who sought after wisdom, must needs find it extremely difficult to swallow them.

2. The Jews required a sign, and such a sign, as might be no less too mighty for all those which had been wrought by *Moses's* rod, than was his Serpent for those of the *Egyptian* Magicians. The Founders of all other religions wheedled the Credulous crowd into a belief of their familiarity with some God: Thus did *Numa* impose upon his *Romans*, and *Mahomet* upon his *Arabiens*: But *Moses* was publicly owned by God in the eyes of the whole people, who for the space of forty years lived upon miracles under his conduct; they saw and heard the dreadful thunders and lightnings.

nings which promulgated their laws, which they therefore believed must be Immortal, because they knew them to be divine : And can they believe him to come from the same God, who prophaned the Sabbath which that law had made the cognisance of his peculiar people ?

To this prejudice derived from Religion, add another from Interest. They called the law their Inheritance, and as such they valued it ; they look't upon the *D'ni* the profane residue of Mankind, as no less Inferiour to their holy selves, than Superior to the Beasts : and that they should be levelled into an equality, how incredible it appeared, we may measure from the astonishment of the great Apostle, who speaks of it, as if he were again struck down by a light and voice from heaven. *Eph. 1. 11. By revelation he made known to me the mystery, &c. and verse the 9th. To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he proposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. What is This so wonderful Mystery ? even this, which cannot be comprehended in one clause, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promises in Christ by the Gospel.* By such amazement of this great Apostle, we may judge of his whole Nation, and by the astonishment of him, who would not have believed upon any less evidence than a revelation, we may safely measure the difficulty which lay upon all those that were trained up in the same Religion.

Another stumbling-block lay quite cross their way, because cross to their expectations : They lookt for a Messia, that by his Victories should no less advance them in Prosperity above all other Nations, than *Moses* by his Law had advanced them in

Holiness : a Messia, whose Person should be Illustrious, his Sword Victorious, his Reign Glorious, and of whose Kingdom there should be no end, either in point of Extent or Duration ; Such a Messia did their Prophets promise, and the time appointed was now fulfilled ; their expectations therefore were big, and their longings ardent : And must this triumphant Messia now dwindle into a vagabond Galilean ? Must their expected Triumphs sink into this dismal Promise, *He that will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me !* This was therefore a great stumbling-block to the Understandings, because it lay cross to their Interests ; they were the more Unable, because Unwilling, to believe it ; which therefore required a weight of importunities and promises, sufficient to counterballance the double weight of reluctancies. Nor was this the worst, for

2. The Danger was at That time no less than the Difficulty. I say at That time, because That circumstance is highly considerable : As it was extraordinary in point of Danger to the Disciples, so did it require such extraordinary promises and importunities from our Lord, as might induce them both to combat all Difficulties, and outface all Danger.

In good and peaceable Times, when a Prince exerciseth his Power without opposition, as there is no Merit in Loyalty, so is there no Proclamation of Reward to it. But if he be driven from his Throne, and disabled not only to Govern his Subjects, but to Defend Himself: if Loyalty be treated as Rebellion, and to assert the oppressed Prince's Right be a forfeiture of Life and Estate ; in such a case, the Prince's Interest concurrereth with Justice, to persuade him to encourage his good Subjects with Promises Extraordinary as his Own Needs, and Their Danger.

Just thus it was in those Times when Faith made so great figure in the Gospel, that it seemed to engross the whole Duty of

of a Christian, and all the promises of Salvation. Had it been sufficient to have believed with a Convinced, yet Silent mind; whatever the Difficulty might have been, the Safety might have equalled it : But this could not be accepted ; the mouth must join with the heart, *Rom. 10. 10. For with the Heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the Mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Nicodemus came to our Lord with the Former without the Later ; for coming *by night*, and Privately owning what he was either Ashamed or Afraid Openly to profess, he is told in the Rabbinical stile, that unless by Baptism he make Open Profession of his Faith, he cannot be a Christian, *Joh. 3.* To the same sense also did our Lord tell his Apostles, when he commissioned them to preach the Gospel, *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved : not simply he that believeth, but he that believeth and is baptized ;* so making a Publick Profession of his Belief, and himself a Visible Member of Christ's Church.

And here those, who upon this account deny Infants to be capable of Baptism, because they are incapable of Belief, may do well to consider the change of Times, and of the reason thereon depending. At That time, whoever did not openly profess the New and Persecuted religion, must be supposed to joyn with the rulers in that religion, which was publicly professed and established by the laws of the Land : but now the wind bloweth from the opposit quarter, and since the Gospel is the established religion, and the profession of the very parents maketh great odds against any danger of the contrary, the Church may, upon small security from other sureties, admit any infant for a member.

To which also we may add, that our Lord to his promise of *everlasting life* annexed another : *These signs shall follow them that believe, in my name they shall cast out Devils &c.* The miraculous powers which were There-

fore at That time given, because at that time they were necessary toward planting the new Gospel, ceased with the need which required them, and for the same reason did the Method, of belief preceding baptism.

At present we are not considering the Method, but the Design of Baptism : it was an open Profession of Faith, and therewith an open Defiance to the World and all its Powers : The Rulers had no less malice in their hearts, than Power in their hands, against all that should profess a Faith, which must abolish the law of *Moses*, which they gloried in, as advancing them to a singular holiness above all other Nations, who yet were no less Enemies to the same new Religion, which must destroy their Idols. Our Saviour therefore dealeth plainly and faithfully, *He that will be my disciple, must take up his cross and follow me : He that hateth not Father and Mother, yea and his own life also, cannot be my disciple : I send you forth as lambs among wolves ; ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my names sake, &c.*

Such harpships were not more contrary to the Appetites of flesh and blood, than to the Notions they had been educated in, of great Prosperity under the Messiah : They had dreamed of another kind of *Victory over the World*, than what *St. John* boasted, saying, *this is the Victory which overcometh the World, even your Faith ;* your faith which overcometh the world by suffering all kind of Persecutions in this life, in assurance of glorious Rewards in another.

And in this, the Faith of the Christian outvyeth That of *Abraham* himself. There was indeed a danger that he might lose his *Isaac*, if God could not restore him to life when sacrificed ; but he had an experiment of God's power to give him another Son, notwithstanding his old age if he could not restore the Same, But to the faithful disciples of Christ there was apparent,

not Danger only, but Certainty, of loss of their *All, Children, Parents, Lands, Liberty, yea, Life it self.*

Blessed be the gracious Providence of God, that now and for many Ages the wind is turned to the contrary point. Our Education maketh is now as difficult, and our Laws as dangerous, to deny Christ, as at first it was to confess him: and consequently whatever Extraordinary merit it might derive from those topicks, must now be lowerd, and when it shall thus be reduced to its Ordinary, and permanent worth, it will appear (like Loyalty in peaceable times) a common grace, worthy of no greater than common rewards, For now its whole stock of merit is owing to its fruits, wherein also it falleth short of what it bore in the times of its planting; for at that time

3. The Necessity of Faith was equal to the Difficulty and Danger: And indeed without This, the other two or either of them would have made the Command unreasonable.

That Prince would not deserve to be owned in the Best of times, much less to be fought for in the Worst, that should Needlessly impose Hard and Dangerous services upon his good Subjects.

To expose them to hardships and dangers of a necessary War, hath always been justified in the best Kings; and to encourage their valour with promise of suitable rewards is equally Just and Wise: But to expose them to fight with Beasts, only for pleasure of the Spectacle, was abhorred by faithful Christians when practised by wanton heathen. Let us therefore distinguish the Times.

1. This Necessity of Faith had something singular at that time when it was first exalted to such Honour. A great, and Dangerous but Necessary, and otherwise Uuaccomplishable work must be performed. The Kingdom of Heaven must subdue all the resisting world: God's wor-

ship must be stript of all those Ceremonies wherewith his own hand had dress'd it, and reduced to simple nakedness of spirit and truth; the partition wall must be broken down which appropriated God's holy people, &c. Toward so great a work he came furnished with no other power, but that of working miracles for mens conviction: and should those who were thereby convinced, hide their belief within their own breasts, this might bring some particular Persons, not whole Nations to subjection. It was therefore Necessary to call aloud not only for Belief, but for Profession of it: and since such a Profession at such a Time, must run such a gandelope, between Difficulties and Dangers, it was but reasonable, that the importunities of the Calls and the price of the Promises, should joyn with the Necessity of the Performance to outweigh so great Discouragements.

2. Though in such Extraordinary respects the Necessity be now abated, so that every Professor need not be a Preacher or Confessor in the hardest sence; yet there still remains a Permanent necessity, from the influence which Faith Always (because Naturally) hath upon the believers Actions; and since These must always be Holy, That must always be indispensible.

Loyalty is loyalty at All times. In the worst times it will Fight, in the best it will Obey: and when it hath no Occasion, will be ready upon All occasions to approve it self faithful. And Faith is Faith at all times. When the world fighteth against its Lord, it will fight against the world in his cause: it hath the same Valour when it hath not the same occasion to exercise it by suffering, as had the primitive Christians; and it hath ever the faithfulness to fight against all kinds of Enemies to his kingdom, Flesh and Blood, and spiritual wickedness, and whatever will not have the Lord rule over it.

The Christian in the most peaceable times is a Souldier listed under his Lord's Banner

Banner in Baptism: he must follow (when called) the Captain of his Salvation that was made perfect by sufferings; and when tempted, he must walk in the steps of his father *Abraham*, sacrifice his Lusts, though no less dear than was his *Isaac*.

Our Lord therefore is not like some weak Princes, that upon meer unaccountable Caprice, load their good Subjects with heavy burthens, and advance worthless favourites to undeserved honors; but measureth his Laws by his Subjects Needs. What Natural Religion taught, the Gospel verifieth, Our Lord himself declared, that the reason of his coming into the world was his father's love to it, And it must be a greater mystery than any he hath required us to believe, if he should so Unkindly treat the world which he so Dearly loved, as to require them upon pain of eternal death, to believe more than is necessary for their salvation: for should he require more than is Necessary, he must do it either for some other reason,

or without any reason at all. If we believe him to require faith for any Other reason, than because it is necessary for our encouragement to Holiness in order to Happiness; we dishonour him, because no other reason can be worthy of his Goodness or Majesty: If upon no other reason at all, we dishonour him, because this would contradict his Wisdom, which never acteth without good reason.

And now I hope we sufficiently discover why Faith is so much exalted in the Gospel: The reasons are partly Extraordinary and expired, partly Ordinary and permanent: The Extraordinary, derived from the circumstances wherein the Gospel was first preached: The Ordinary, from its serviceableness to the divine life which Natural Religion aimed at, but the Gospel by means of believing, exalteth with nobler arguments, as will more clearly appear, if we examine the Subject matter which Faith is to believe.

C H A P. VI.

Of Faith in CHRIST, as Saviour of the World.

THAT the great things that are spoken of Faith, oblige us to enquire what is necessary for us to believe, is too clear to need Proof: yet is there nothing less heeded or understood, even by the Inquisitive: and so, That Grace whose great Worth is derived from its Serviceableness to our Happiness, by disturbing our Peace Private and Publick, is made it's greatest Enemy.

Our present Work calleth for Enquiries, not Complaints: and therefore adjourning these to a more proper time, we shall pursue the Enquiry now before us: viz. *What are those saving Truths, to the Belief whereof, eterna! Life is promised?*

And here our former Remarks meet us again. Our Lord avoideth Multiplying Articles of Faith, no less than Commands: Those were but Two at most, *Faith and Repentance*; and sometimes those Two were reduced to One, and Either one: In the same manner doth he treat Faith: Sometimes it's Object is but *One*, and sometimes *Two*, and sometimes *Either* of the two; because they are Two in Notion, but inseparable in Action.

There are Two Kinds of Objects of Belief.

- I. *The PERSON in whom we believe.*
- II. *The WORD which we believe upon Credit of the PERSON.*

And the Promise of Eternal Life is given

sometimes to the *One*, sometimes to the *Other*, sometimes to *Both* joyntly.

1. Sometimes it is given to believe in the *Person* of Christ; and this is more frequently, because it is the Ground whereon the other is built. Thus we find in our Lord's Discourse with *Nicodemus* and *Martha*, and *the Close of St. Johns Gospel*.

2. Sometimes it is given to belief of the *Promise*. Thus *St. Paul* in his Entrance upon that accurate *Diatribes* concerning the *Resurrection*, telleth the *Corinthians*, *This is the Gospel by which they must be saved*. And when he pleaded, that for the *Hope of the Resurrection* he was called into question, he spake no less Truly than Wisely: because that is the Substance of our Belief.

3. Sometimes it is given to *Both* joyntly. As we found, *Rom. 10. 9. 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*. And the *Athenians* thought *St. Paul* a *Settler* of strange Gods, because he spake so much of *Jesus and the Resurrection*; supposing *Anastasis* to be the Goddess of *Jesus*. These two are so nearly allied, that they cannot be separated: For whoever believes in *Christ*, as the *Son of God*, must upon his *Credit* authorised by his *Resurrection*, believe his *Promise*, that they shall have a *Resurrection* Themselves. Yet nearly as they are allied, they are not the Same, and therefore require to be treated severally.

First therefore we shall speak of what

is first in order of nature, *Belief in the Person*: and this that we may do the more distinctly, we shall consider.

1. *What kind of Person our Lord requireth us to believe him to be?*
2. *What is meant by believing in him?*

I. Concerning the Former, *viz. What kind of Person our Lord requireth us to believe him?* We must consider, that at That time the World was big with Expectation, and earnest in longing for such a Person, has never blessed it since its first Creation; a Person of whom such glorious things were promised as dazzled their Understandings; a Person that must excel *Moses* in Miracles, *Joshuah* in Victories, *Solomon* in Riches and Wisdom; All *Prophets* in Knowledge, and all *Kings* in Power: the *Son*, and yet the *Lord* of *David*, who should not only free them from the then galling Yoke of the *Romans*, but subdue those *Romans*, and with them all their Provinces: the time of the promised coming of this great Person was now fulfilled, and their Longings sharpened to so much the greater Keenness.

This fulness of time our Lord made the Subject of his first Sermon, saying, *The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand*: This was so notoriously known, that it made the Jews obstinate even to madness in defence of their City and Temple against the *Romans*; yea, it made so much, and so loud talk in all the East, that the Noise reached to *Rome*, and contributed not a little to *Vespasian's* Advancement to the Empire: because (saith the Historian) *percebat sermo*, there was common Talk that at That time there would arise in the East a Person that should govern the World.

Such an one had *Daniel* promised, *Dan. 7. 13. There was given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom that All Nations and Languages should serve him*: The Title there given him, is no other than the

Son of Man, which our Saviour oft times assumes to himself; which that we may understand how much it may import, we must consider, that the Jews had some peculiar Idioms, whereof two principally did import the eminence of the subject spoken of.

1. They left that indefinite, which they would imply to exceed any Definition: *God do so to me, and more also*, was a Curse which signified more than any Expression could define: *Therefore I will do This unto thee, and because I will do This unto thee, therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*, said the Prophet; whereby he threatened a Judgment, and required an Attonement *Extraordinary and Unexpressible*.

If our Title [*Son of Man*] seem not sufficiently accounted for by this Idiom, and the Prophet *Daniel's* Prophecy; some other of his Characters will, *Joh. 8. 24.* He saith of himself, *If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins*. The word *HE* is sufficiently indefinite, but the Original not having so much as that, is much more so. The Baptist sent two of his Disciples to enquire if he were *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*. *The Comer*, or *He that shall come*, and the Multitude blessed him in the *Name of the Lord*, under that Character. The *Messia* is a Great, but Indefinite Title. Anointing was a Complement of the greatest Kindness and Honor that could be bestowed on a Guest; and from that Office in festival Receptions, it was preferred to a Ceremony toward the highest Dignities. *Prophets, Priests, and Kings* were enfeated by it; and our Lord is thereby charactered, but indefinitely, whether *Prophet*, or *Priest*, or *King*, or *All*.

2. Another Idiom of advancing any Thing or Person, was by entitling it to *God*; thus *Rivers of God, Mountains of God, &c.* were the most eminent in their Kind: *Man of God*, signified the most excellent Prophet; *Kingdom of God*, the most excellent Government; and *the Son of God*, was by *Daniel* made a Character of the greatest

greatest Beauty and Majesty. For whereas by that Phrase he described the 4th. in *Nebuchadnezzar's* Furnace, we are not to imagine that he pretended to have seen the *Son of God*, and thereby to know who were like him in Garments or Countenance; but that he used that Phrase as the highest Expression of extraordinary Beauty.

These high Characters, the *Messia*, or *Christ*, and the *Son of God*, and the *Comer*, are given our Lord, sometimes severally, sometimes joyntly. *St. Paul* testifieth to the Jews, that *This Jesus that I preach unto you, is the Christ*; *St. John* professeth, *these things are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*: and *Martha* declareth, *I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the World*. And lest it might seem possible that some other Person might be capable of all these, however extraordinary Eulogies; to exalt him *above every name that may be named*, he stileth himself, not only the *Son*, but the *Only begotten Son of God*.

The other Characters speak an unmeasurable Excellency, and this last a singular and incommunicable one: and upon this Singularity of his being *the only begotten Son of God*, expressed by his being *anointed before he came into the World*, we shall anon find him prefer himself above all that were upon less accounts called *Gods*.

These and the like high Characters speak him a Person of Supereminent and unmeasurable Greatness; a Person like (his emblem) the light, so glorious, that by our last intent view we cannot plainly discover any thing of it but this, That we cannot discover. And this is so far from hindering the Belief which he requireth, that it is the very reason why we are obliged to pay it. For as we therefore believe in the Light, because the same Brightness which dazzleth our Eyes if we fix them directly upon

its Fountain, plainly sheweth us every thing that it shineth on; so our Lord, whose Divinity maketh the Dignity of his Person unintelligible, is for that very reason to be believed in with our utmost Confidence. And thus himself expresseth,

II. *What is meant by believing in his Person?* For *John* 12. 35. *Jesus said unto them, yet a little while is the Light with you, walk while you have the Light. — While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the Children of Light*. In which Words he plainly declareth, that all Men are *Travelers*; what the Light is to *Travellers*, That himself is to the World; and therefore what Confidence the *Traveller* hath in the Light, the same must we have in Him.

Should the *Wise*, the *Greatest*, yea; All the Men in the World, or an Angel from Heaven, contradict the Light, the *Traveller* would not abate his Belief in it: should any Authority whatever tell him, that is a Tree, which the Light telleth him is a Stone; should they tell him that is a Path, which the Light telleth him is a River; should they persuade him to go where the Light sheweth a Precipice, or that there is no Path where the Light sheweth a plain one; he would with a little Variation apply to them all the *Authentick Rule*, *Let the Light be true, but every man a Liar*.

Thus is it, that we are to believe in *Christ*. for thus *Abraham* believed in *God*, maugre all Difficulties which his Affection to *Isaac*, and all the Contradictions which his Reason could oppose, the one against his Obedience, the other against his Confidence. And this is our *Saviour's* Claim, *ye believe in God, believe also Me*, i. e. with the same Confidence.

Where the Importance is unvaluable, no Care can be too great: we shall therefore most carefully and distinctly con-

der, that the Light of the Sun may be lookt upon two ways, either with a wary Eye, diligently but obliquely, observing what it shewed by its Beam; or with a direct Eye, curiously viewing and endeavouring to discover its Features. So our Belief in Christ may look upon him under two Respects: with respect to the *World*, as its *Saviour*; or with respect to his *Person*, as the *Son of God*.

I. *With respect to the Word*: Every one seeth the Sun to be its greatest Benefactor, bountifully communicating all the Comforts, yea, the very Beings, which every of its Inhabitants enjoyeth. And at this Bounty is the Reason of the Suns shining, so it is no *Less*, yea, it is *More* understood by the Traveller on his Road, than by the Philosopher in his Cell. Thus it is with the *Sun of Righteousness*, his Title is the *Saviour of the World*, and his Business is to make good his Title. This made him *rise with healing in his Wings*, and for This Reason he requireth so to be believed in, as the Sun is by the Traveller, who directeth every step by its Light.

Whatever the Capacity or Opinion of the Traveller be; whether he be an illiterate Clown, that thinketh the Sun no bigger than the Earth; whether he believe the Light to be an Accident, or Substance; whatever his Thoughts be of the Nature, Magnitude, Distance, &c. still the Sun is his faithful Guide, whenever he walks by its Light.

And that this Practical Faith is all that our Saviour requireth, seemeth plain, as by other Evidences, so by his own Words: For when the Jews came about him, and said unto him, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly*; and he in answer thereto, called God his Father, *they took up Stones to stone him, because (they said) thou being a Man, makest thy self God*: he did not, upon so

pressing an Occasion, assert his Right, but abating so much as exceeded their Comprehension, satisfied Himself (that he might satisfy Them) with what might be sufficient for their Conviction to Salvation: *Is it not written in your Law (said he) I have said you are Gods? If he called them Gods to whom the Word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the World, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God? That he spake this in compliance with their Capacity, not their Rage, appeareth, because when they would not be appeased, he escaped with pleasure out of their Hands, since it was sufficient to their Salvation, to know how and why he came into the World, and that (as his Work, so also) his Person was greater than ever had been in it since its Creation; he speaketh nothing of what he had been from Eternity in Himself, but what he was in Relation to the World, and in Comparison with all other Messengers of God to it.*

To Them (saith he) God sent his Word by their Betters, but it is not sent To Me by my Betters, but By me to my Inferiors; They were sent into the World the common Way, and were afterward sanctified by receiving Gods Word; but I was first sanctified, and afterward sent; and if they who were Less extraordinary, were honoured with a higher Title, being called *Gods*; can it be Blasphemy in me, who am their Superior, if I take to my self a meaner Title?

Thus did he (like *Elijah*) contract himself to their Dimensions, requiring only such a Measure of Faith as was suitable to their Understanding, and his own Designs. Where he not greater than *Moses* and all the Prophets, he could not have competent Power to advance such a *Kingdom of God*, as must abrogate Those Laws which were writ-

ten by God's own Hand. It was therefore necessary he should require such a Belief in his Person, as might bring the World into subjection to his Scepter : Less than this cannot serve his Ends, and More than this he doth not require.

C H A P. VII.

Of Belief with meer Respect to the Person of Christ. Inquisitiveness concerning his Incarnation censured : First, because Impertinent.

II. **W**ith mere respect to his Person, it is no more necessary that we should understand what he is, than it is for a Traveller to understand the Features of the Sun. When the great Question concerning the Eternity of his Godhead first embroiled the World, the Emperor Constantine, by the most esteemed of his Bishops, sent to the Heads of the contending Parties, an every way gracious * Letter, perswading each of them to silence : wherein we find many Sayings for quieting the Dispute, more worth than all that since hath been written for deciding it. We shall take notice of Three.

I. He condemneth it as a silly Question, fitter for Fools or Children, than Priests or Wise Men. And this he presseth no less than eight or nine times. How justly, we may discover in three particulars.

- 1. It is impertinent to our Lord's Design.
- 2. It is Fruitless to the Contemplators own purpose.
- 3. It is Dangerous.

I. It is impertinent to our Lord's Design. For as the Sun doth not shine upon the World to gain to its self a small Reflexion

of its Light from a Jewel, or the praise of a Philosopher, or any less reason, but only to benefit the World ; so neither did the day spring from on high visit us for any other reason, but to bring healing in his Wings.

Whoever thinks otherwise, must dishonour him mote, and more effectually deny his Divinity, than ever any Heretick did : for he must suppose at least some Proportion, between the Breath of Man and the Blood of the Lord.

The Clown may think the Sun no bigger than his Bushel ; but whoever hath the least Tincture of Astronomy, is astonished at the vast Disproportion, wherein the whole Earth falleth short of any one fixed Star ; and when he further considereth what innumerable Multitudes more are discovered by the Telescope to his Eye, and beyond that to his Reason ; upon consideration of such a stupendious Disproportion between the Earth and so many Worlds, both for Greatness and Brightness ; he cannot think so highly of its poor Inhabitants, as to conceive their great Creator should be so greedy of a little of their corrupt Breath, as to purchase it with such a Fall from Heaven. Himself observe to us, that those who exercise Authority among Men, are called Benefactors : could we harbor such base Thoughts of our Lord

* Euseb. vita Constant. lib. 2. c. 67.

Lord, as to degrade him from the Dignity of a Benefactor, to the Meanness of a Tradesman, and that in the vilest Ware too, we must implicitly deny his Divinity; but to suppose him so unskilful to his poor Trade, as to pay for his base Ware, infinitely more than its worth; this must cast no less Dishonour upon his Wisdom than his Majesty. Yet this we must do, if we think he will grant Salvation upon no other Terms, than a Belief of the whole Truth concerning the Dignity of his Person. For this will imply, either that he Came and Suffered on purpose to purchase to himself the Honour of such a Belief, or that he denieth to his faithful Servants That Benefit which he came into the World on purpose to purchase for them.

We may do well a little farther to consider, that That part of Mankind which our Lord most favoureth, are most unable to pay him such a Belief. He made it matter of Thanks that his Father had *hid the Gospel from the Wise and Prudent, and revealed it to Babes*; and afterward St. James observed, that *God had chosen the Poor of this World Rich in Faith*: Yea, when the Baptist sent two of his Disciples to our Lord, asking, *art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* our Lord answered him not in one Syllable, Negative, or Affirmative, but put him to spell out the Truth by Signs, among which this was the Last, *to the Poor the Gospel was preached*: which as it was a Completion of Prophecies, so was it a Sign of the *Messia*, equal to his *mighty Works*. And must the Poor, who were the First-Born of the Gospel, whose Condition our Lord honoured with his Birth, as he did their Persons with his Conversation, who in all Parts of the World, First embraced the Faith, and in all Ages make the much greatest Numbers; must they be excluded from the Benefit of Christ's Redemption, only because by

his Providence, they are excluded from the Means of Understanding the Mystery of his Incarnation? They may with their humble Simplicity outdo the Subtilest School-men in Obedience to our Lords Commands, i. e. they may with less Knowledge, produce more and better Fruit: and must They perish for want of such a Belief, as is morally impossible for them to acquire, though they desire and endeavor no less to conform their Belief to the Doctrines, than their Practices to the Commands of their Saviour?

That such a Conceit is no less contrary to the Belief of the First Preachers and Believers of the Gospel, than it is to the first Dictates of Reason and Religion, no Enquirer can be unsatisfied. St. Paul finding Disciples at *Ephesus* that had *not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost*, but had only been baptized into *John's Baptism*, told them no more of Christ but this, that *John indeed baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, saying unto the People, that they should believe on him that should come after him, i. e. on Jesus Christ; when they heard this, they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with Tongues and prophesied*. When the *Ethiopian Eunuch* believed that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, of whom *Isaiah* prophesied; *Philip* immediately admitted him to Baptism. At one Sermon, Three Thousand became Disciples: Can any Man imagine that they understood the whole Mystery of the Incarnation?

In the next succeeding Ages, as the Gospel spread farther over the World; so did the Curiosity of Doctors improve in explaining its Mystery, and their Zeal in pressing those Explications upon the Belief of Disciples: Yet in *Justin Martyr's* Time, though they themselves believed the Godhead of Christ, they did not so impose this Belief upon All Disciples, as

to deny Them to be Christians, who did not come up to it. This is plain by the Words of that Father to * Tryphon the Jew: *Though (saith he) I shall not prove that Christ is God otherwise, than by proving that This is the Christ, and that it was foretold that he should be such; yet it will be just that thou shouldst believe me to be deceived in that one Point, and not deny that this is the Christ, though he seem to be a Man born of Men, and said to be chosen to be Christ: For there are some (my Friends) among us, who profess him to be the Christ, and affirm him to be Man born of Men, with whom indeed I do not agree; nor will many speak so, who are of the same Opinion with me.* By which Words it is plain, that however the Belief of Christs Godhead was then most generally received, yet were not the otherwise minded excluded from the benefit of his Redemption as Unbelievers.

Such was the Faith, and such the Charity of the best Christians, before Prosperity had made them wanton, and Disputacity fierce. But now that the Question hath cost so much Pains, Contention and Blood, it hath gotten a new Value, not from any new intrinsic Worth, but from the Price which it hath cost. This is the only Reason of the Value of Diamonds, and This Question is like them, Costly, Hard, and Useless; and to most Eyes, as bright too. For it seemeth that the Honour due to our Lord's Person, must impart a suitable Va-

* *Ad Tryph. Jud.*

lue to every Question wherein it is concerned; and then it will follow, that we cannot slight this Great one, without some Neglect or Contempt of our Lord himself.

But on the contrary, the Worth of a Proposition lieth not in its Matter, but its Form; not in its Terms, but their Connexion; and if this be unworthy of Those, the Proposition is so far from being the more to be valued for the Dignity of its Terms, that it is to be despised, and perhaps, condemned for debasing them, by a Position unworthy of them. Though it be not reasonable, yet its possible to make a Pin of Gold; in such a case, it will not be an Undervalment to the Metal, to say, that such a Pins Point is nothing worth, because it hath very little of the Metal, and nothing of Serviceableness in it; but we must justly censure him that should put that soft noble Metal, to an Office fit only for a baser and harder one. It is not the Matter, but the Point of this Question which is now under Consideration, and we do not disregard, but honour our Lords Person, when we censure a Dispute which employeth in it Boys play.

Such was the Judgment (we see) of the great *Constantine*, when the Game was first set on foot; and such afterwards was that of *Leonas*, sent by *Constantius*, to moderate in the Council of *Seleucia*, who finding the Bishops fierce and endless at this *Pushpin*, dismissed them with this just Reprimand, * *Go, and play the Foo's at Home.*

* *Socrat. Lib. 2. Cap. 23.*

C H A P. VIII.

It is Fruitless towards the Inquirers own Satisfaction.

II. **A** Second Evidence of the Folly of such an Enquiry, is this, That it is *Fruitless* toward the Questionists own Satisfaction; This is pressed by the good Emperor, in these Words, *How few are there that can exactly enough discern, or worthily*

worthily enough express the force of Matters so mighty and abstruse? Or if there be any that believeth he can so do, how few are there among the Multitude, whom he can enable to understand it? And this is lively represented in our Lord's Emblem: The Brightness of the Sun, which to the Traveller plainly sheweth his Way; but if looked upon with a fixed and steady View, endeavoring to discover the Features of his Face, will shew nothing but the Weakness of the Gazers Eyes; which now it will not instruct, but Dazzle; and the Light of the Gospel to a faithful Believer, sheweth so much of our Lord's Person, as must make us trust in his Words concerning the Way to Salvation; but if we will needs enquire into the Mysteries of his Divinity and Incarnation, we shall find our Understandings no less confounded by the Brightness of the Mystery, than our Eyes are by that of the Sun. And of this the Holy Ghost seemeth to warn us, not only by a careful Silence concerning our Lord's Genealogy, but by express Types and Prophecies concerning its Inscrutability.

This was so known a Character of the *Messia*, that the Jews, thence derived an Objection, *We know this Man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no Man knoweth whence he is: He is a Priest for ever, after the Order of Melchisedec*, of whom it is industriously observed, that he was without Father, without Mother, and without Descent. Two Evangelists trace his, (our Lord's) Genealogy: but as they derive it not from his real, but supposed Father; so do they take two severy ways, not to satisfy, but amuse us. What is this but to admonish us against Curiosity? The Pedigree of his Flesh might easily have been, either Cleared, or Unmentioned. Had the Evangelists been wholly silent concerning

it, we had less wondered: but that they should profess to instruct us, yet doubly disappoint us; first, by deriving it from a wrong Father, and then by distracting us between two Ways; what is this, but to verify the Prophets Description of the *Messia*, *Who shall declare his Generation?* And what doth this so careful Concealment of his Generation, according to his Human Nature, signifie more plainly, than a warning against searching after the Eternal Generation of his Divinity? If it were needless (and therefore left impossible) to prove him derived from *David*, which was one of his most revealed Characters; how can it be otherwise, to understand That Generation of his, which must needs be so much the more above our Understanding, as the Nature of God is above our own?

But Licourishness after forbidden Fruit, is the Original Sin, whereof all the Sons of *Eve* are guilty, and the Christian World hath been a greater Example, both of the Sin and the Punishment. For as soon as the Emperor became a *Nursing Father*, Teaching Fathers grew wanton. And the Bishop of *Alexandria* boldly answered the Prophets Question, *I will declare his Generation*; but he did it in such nice manner, that *Arius* a Presbyter, cavelled at it as contradictory; and while either of them was renacious of his own Assertion, all the Eastern Churches were embroiled with fierce Contentions. To quence this Fire the good Emperor sent to the Heads of the contending Parties, his abovementioned Letter, which not availing, he convened a General Council at *Nice*, of all the Bishops of the Empire, who justified the Bishop, and excommunicated the Presbyter, who afterwards exhibited a Confession of his Faith to the Emperor, who glad to find it consonant to the *Nicene*, sent it to a Council then assembled

bled at *Hierusalem*, That Council approved of it, and sent their approbatory letters, both to the Emperor and the Bishop of *Alexandria*, whom thereupon the Emperor required to admit *Arius* to Communion. But the Bishop answered, that *Arius* was excommunicated by a General Council, and may not be restored by any less Authority. And that the Disobedience might appear Necessary, an important word is found wanting in *Arius's* confession. And that word is now made matter both of Condemnation against *Arius* who omitted it in his confession, and of Disputes among the Bishops, who subscribed the *Nicene*.

For thus speaks one of the most partial Historians. *Socr. l. 2. c. 18. As we plainly find by several Epistles which after the Council Bishops wrote to one another, the word [Consubstantial] grievously troubled some of their minds: in sitting whereof while they spent much time and pains. and too nicely endeavouring to describe us force, they raised among themselves an intestine war, and what they did, differed nothing from fighting in the dark; For they seemed not at all to understand why they railed at each other. A hundred and fifty years had this blind dispute raged, and at last was Determined as Blindly as it had been managed. For the Emperor Theodosius, finding Constantine's way unsuccessful, because the zeal of neither party would admit of Silence or Toleration; took another course, by Silencing the One, and Authorising the Other: So he forbade all men to contradict what was taught by the Bishops of Rome and Alexandria.*

Thus was the Knot cut which would not be untied: Yet are we not even thus Disentangled. For later Ages, disputing the question in the Schools with less Heat, but more subtilty, have determined the question quite

otherwise than *Athanasius* had done. For thus saith *Athanasius* in his Dialogue of this Subject: *The divine nature is common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the human nature is common to Peter, James, and John.* And when the Adversary objects, that then *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must be Three Gods, as Peter, James, and John are Three men: He demeth that Peter, James and John are Three men if they be of one Mind, because then they are one in the Lord: But a Heathen, a Jew, and a Christian, are three men because of three minds.* And with a nearer resemblance he addeth, *the Father, Son, and H. G. are as Bishop, Priest, and Deacon; but Bishop, Priest, and Deacon are οὐκ ὅμοιοι, therefore so are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.* *Athan. dial. de trinit.*

And might not a Heathen at this rate justify Polytheism, provided his Gods disagreed not among themselves? The School-men therefore will not stand to this state of the question, but distinguish between *Person* and *suppositum rationale*; which (yet) they cannot do as to satisfy themselves, and therefore shelter themselves in their impregnable fort, *Mystery*, and thence thunder upon the adversaries both of This and of another no less beloved *Mystery*: For they make this their cock-argument for *Transubstantiation*; That since the Scripture is no less express for the *One* than the *Other*, and the Contradictions no less gross in the *One* than in the *Other*, therefore we must embrace the one as well as the other.

To this Objection of the *Romanists*, and to others of the *Unitaries*, we have found an Answer, that we must not infer from our Own Nature to God's; for that Our's is Finite, and God's is Infinite: Three Persons among us are Three Men, because they

agree in one Common Nature ; but the Divine Nature is not a Common one, but a Singular ; and therefore Three Persons do not make Three Gods. If you understand not this, you must not Wonder ; or at least, you must not Gainsay it : For it is a *Mystery*, which Reason may not pretend to fathom.

Why, if it be a *Mystery*, and must still be so, to what purpose do we Enquire into it, or Dispute concerning it ?

The General that marched his Army a whole dark night, and in the morning found himself in the same place whence he marched, would never have so harassed Himself and Them, had he known he should have gotten nothing but sweat and dirt by his pains. And if we know we must at last lie down in the same dissatisfaction, which the very name of a *Mystery* importeth, why should we not do it rather Without toyl than After it ? To dispute concerning a *Mystery*, and at the same time confess it a *Mystery*, is a contradiction as great as any in the greatest *Mystery*.

That it was a *Mystery* to those very Councils which determined it, may appear, not only from the various Confessions made by several Councils, (whereof *Socrates* reckoneth no less than Nine,) or the Contrary determinations of several counter councils, (who condemned each others as the Emperors changed to influence them,) but by the wavering of the very same Council : For that of *Sirmium* framed two or three, one whereof they would fain have reneged, and laboured all their possible to call in all its Copies.

Mysteries are seldom barren, nor hath this been so. This hath not indeed been so fruitful as That of Transubstantiation, so it hath brought forth Sufficient, and more than the best understanding can well maintain. If Reason cannot comprehend how there can be three Persons in the same Individual Nature ;

no more can it, how the same Individual Person can have Two Natures, and those so unequal as the Human and Divine. To avoid this, there can be but two ways imaginable in Reason : either Christ must be Two Persons, because he hath two such different Natures ; or He must have but One Nature, because he is but One Person : And either of these had its advocate.

That *Nestorius* asserted two Persons in Christ, if it appear not by his express words, is inferred from his exception against the Blessed Virgins Eulogy. He said she ought not to be stiled *Mother of God*, and This raised Dissentions over all the Eastern Churches, so like those that were begotten upon the mother *Mystery*, that another Historian describeth them in the very same words : *Mens fought as in the dark, now one way, and then another; and what they asserted they immediately denied.* To determine the dispute, a Council is called, which condemneth *Nestorius* ; who thereupon was himself quiet, but could not make the question so.

Eutyches on the other hand asserted, that the Divine Nature swallowed up the Human ; so that, however they had been Two Before conjunction, yet Afterward they were but One. This also made great stirs ; a Provincial council at C. P. deprived him, then a more general one at *Ephesus* restored him, and deprived the Bishop of C. P. Then *Leo* Bishop of Rome, whose Letters had been slighted by the Council of *Ephesus*, obtains of the Emperor a General Council at *Calcedon* : There *Dioscorus*, that had been President of the former Council, is accused of divers uncanonical Proceedings ; and that he might be baited as an Heretick, the Epistle of *Leo* Bishop of Rome, and another of *Cyril*, Predecessor to *Dioscorus* in the See of *Alexandria*, were read ; which done, the Bishops in Council cried out,
This

This is the faith of the Fathers, This is the faith of the Apostles, We all believe so, the Orthodox believe so, Anathema to them that do not believe so; Peter hath declared so by Leo, the Apostles taught so, Leo piously and truly hath taught so; This is the faith of Archbishop Leo, Pope Leo believeth so, Leo and Cyril believe so, &c. And when at the recess, the question was to be cleared, it was proposed in this form, *viz. Whether do you agree with Dioscorus, who saith, that Christ consisteth of two Natures; or with Leo, who saith there are two Natures in Christ?* they cried, *they believed Leo, and held for Eutychians all that contradicted them.* The very question in its terms was a Mystery, but the bottom was Clear: *Dioscorus* had slighted the authority of the *Bishop of Rome*, and the Councils business was of more to advance that See above all Churches, by vindicating its authority against *Dioscorus*, than to assert the truth against *Eutyches*; and they were jointly provided for in the sentence, which saith, — *Therefore the most holy and most blessed Archbishop of the great and ancient Rome, Leo, by us and the present Council, and the blessed and ever to be praised Peter, who is the rock and base of the Catholick Church, and foundation of the Orthodox Faith, hath deprived him (Dioscorus) of all Episcopal Dignity, and utterly abdicated him from all Sacerdotal ministry.* Yet did not so Pontifical a Sentence fright the Emperor *Basiliscus*, so as to hinder him from writing a circulatory Letter, wherein he condemned this decision of *Leo*, and all the acts of this Council of *Calcedon*, requiring them to be burnt wherever met with: nor any of the *Bishops of Asia*, either from subscribing That Letter of the Emperor's, or sending to him Another of their own, wherein they prayed him, *not to send any other contrary to it; otherwise the world would be overthrown by Sedi-*

tion, That Council of Calcedon having occasioned infinite bloodshed.

After this, when the Emperor *Heraclius* endeavoured to persuade *Catholicus* to believe (as himself did) that Christ had *two Natures*, and was by him asked, whether he had also *two Wills, and two Actions*; puzzled at so surprizing a question, he sent it to the Patriarch of *C. P.* who answered it negatively: but the *Bishop of Hierusalem* convened his *Suffragans*, and demonstrated, that those who believe but *One Will*, must believe but *One Nature*; and then the Emperor published an Edict, that *men must not assert either that there is One or Two Wills and Actions in Christ.* But his Grandson called a Council which asserted *Two Wills*, and anathematized them who asserted but *One*.

Yet after this again, the great Emperor *Justinian* began to compel the *Bishops* to confess, *that the body of Christ was not capable of any suffering or change*; and had not death prevented the accomplishment of his design, he had not only Restored the *Eutychian Heresy*, but Outdone it.

Thus have we pointed (and only pointed) at some of the Many intangling Questions, which puzzled and divided the subtlest wits of several Ages, and were at last decided by no other Evidence, but of Imperial and Papal Authority; sufficient to Silence disputes, but not to Stablish truth. And who is he that is not discouraged from giving a Confident assent to what is this way obtruded upon his belief; or searching into those Mysteries, that have so confounded the greatest Clerks? Who can penetrate into such Hypermetaphysical Niceties, or reconcile such opposite Assertions? Who can moderate between the Patrons and Adversaries of *Consubstantiality*, then again between its Patrons Themselves, and then again between its First Patrons and the

Schoolmen ? Between the Orthodox and the Nestorians, on one side, and Eutychians on the other ?

We have before proved such a work Needless to saving Faith, because the Poor, *i. e.* the Greatest and (perhaps the) Best part of the world may be saved without it ; and now we find it Impossible to be accomplished by the greatest Clerks, because the more they Search into it, the more they are Confounded : And if Authority must at last determine it, what better than that of the Great Constantine, which doth not give Approbation to Either of the Sides, but censureth Both, not of Error, but of Folly.

Chap. IX. *It is Dangerous.*

III. **A** Third evidence of the folly of such an Enquiry is this, that it is *Dangerous*. He that looketh upon the face of the Sun with a fixt eye, loseth more than his Labour : for he hurteth his Eye ; and Story speaks of some, that quite lost their sight by it. *He that pryeth into the Mystery, will be oppressed with the glory,* is a known Aphorism ; he that boldly asserteth any thing concerning it, runneth himself upon Danger, so much Greater, by how much Higher the Matter of the question is, and by how much Greater the Difficulty is of keeping right, without making a wrong step.

The good Emperor in his abovementioned Letter, gave good warning of this double danger, *We ought to restrain our selves from talking, lest when We cannot sufficiently explain the Question, or our Hearers cannot sufficiently understand our Meaning : either way the people be driven upon a necessity of Blasphemy or Contention.*

The Danger is double. First, Lest the Height of the Question run us into Blasphemy ; and then, lest the Difficulty of it run us

into Error : we say nothing of the Danger of losing Charity by contention, That being too sensibly proved by Experience.

1. There is *danger of Blasphemy* : for tho the Question appear Silly upon the two accounts now mentioned, yet is the Decision Formidable, because of the concern which our Lord's person hath in it. Soon after the Council of Nice had determined it, *the Bishops began to disagree among themselves while they too curiously examined the word questions : for one side thought that those who used that word spake Blasphemy, as thinking the Son to have no substance of his own ; and the other side accused those who thought otherwise, and hated them as Heathens, because they brought in the worship of Many Gods.* On either side, the fall is dreadful, and if we be so fool-hardy as to adventure our selves upon so Dangerous a Precipice, what Commission have we to expose our Lord's Honour, or our Brother's Soul to the hazard ? If the bold enquirer Escape the danger of Error at Last, he is already fallen into a great one, by so mean an opinion of our Lord's Person, as to think it Comprehensible.

We sometimes see Children in meer Sport and Bravery walk on the top of high and narrow Walls, and This we allow as pardonable to their green understandings ; but in a full grown man, we should censure the Folly equal to the Danger ; and both the one and the other so much greater, by how much the Wall were both Higher and Narrower : What then must we judge of those, that adventure upon the double danger, of Error from the Abstruseness of the question, and Blasphemy from the Height of it ? Either party chargeth the other with no less than Blasphemy ; and he that will adventure himself in such a Controversy, had need of a steady head, and firm footing. But,

2. This

2. This is a second danger, that we have *no firm ground* to go upon. How Unsound all Topicks are, we need no other evidence but this, that all are challeng'd by either party with equal assurance. *Scriptures* the *Arians* capt with the *Orthodox*. *Antiquity*, they ever claimed with the same confidence. *Councils*, determined sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other, as the Emperors chanced to influence them. The only advantage of the *Catholicks*, is long Possession, and that, after Sentence. This may suffice to silence the adverse side, but hardly to satisfy either the one or the other, if those *Historians* may be trusted, whose professed partiality to the prevailing side, hath preserved their works from Time and the Emperor's Edict. They have indeed so handled matters, as to hide much, and varnish all; yet even so, we may pick out enough to justify an appeal, by observing how that Possession was first obtained, then continued, and at last settled.

1. The Controversie was first decided by the great Council of *Nice*, whose Decree therein hath ever been esteemed equal to Scripture, even by those who in other things renege its Authority. Yet in this, rather than any other subject may we wave it, upon a sufficient reason offered us by another Council, which confirmed both that Council of *Nice* and *Arius's* Confession. For that of *Antioch* in their Letters to every City justify themselves in these words; * *We do not follow Arius, but receive him when he cometh to us; for how can it be said that we who are Bishops, follow Arius who is but a Presbyter?* If this have any sense, it must be of as good force at *Nice* as at *Antioch*; and thereby, we may judge of the Sentence, which first determined the controversie, not by the Merit

of the cause, but Interest of the parties.

2. The *Progress* of the Controversie was of the same piece. For when *Arius*, after his Condemnation, exhibited such a confession of his Faith, as satisfied both the Emperor and the Council, then sitting at *Hierusalem*; and came with Letters from both, to his Bishop to be restored; his Bishop refused it, saying, that it was *not lawful to restore one that was excommunicated by the whole Church*; the Emperor angry at the affront, sendeth his mandatory Letter, threatening to deprive him if he disobeyed: And now the Controversie was transplanted, from Bishop against Presbyter, to Ecclesiastick Authority against Secular. For though a pretence was found, to cavil at the want of an important word in *Arius's* confession, yet that this was no better than a mere pretence, appears, because many who had subscribed the Decree of the Council of *Nice* seconded the Emperor against *Athanasius* whom a Council at *Tyre* condemned, and the Emperor banished to *Treves*, where he remained during the Emperor's Life.

After whose death the Emperor *Constantine* sent him back to his Bishoprick, alledging that his Father intended it, had not death prevented him. After the death of this Emperor, *Constantius* again banished him, and banished to the Bishop of *Rome*, who recommended him to *Constantius* Emperor of the West, who espoused him and his cause, and wrote effectually in his behalf to his Brother *Constantius*, as to require him upon pain of War to restore him.

Constantius for peace's sake complied, and after the death of both of his Brethren, Patron of *Athanasius*, upon sentence of a Council at *Antioch*, deprived him; he fled again to *Rome*, whose Bishop again embraced him in

* *Socrat. lib. 2. c. 7.*

not only as a Champion of Ecclesiastical Power against Secular, but as an opportune occasion of advancing the Roman See above all other Christian Churches. For by his Pontifical Letters he commanded the Bishops of the East, at a day by himself named, to send their Deputies to give him account of their proceedings against Athanasius and his party, threatening to deprive them, if they acted any more in such manner. The Eastern Bishops scoffed at such his Letters, and in a Council at Sardis excommunicated him for communicating with those whom themselves had excommunicated; and the Western Bishops in requital excommunicated the Eastern; so from a controversy between Ecclesiastical and Secular Authority, rose an immortal Schism between the Western and Eastern Churches; the latter whereof, though they agreed in opposition to the Usurpations of the See of Rome, yet grievously contended among themselves in That question which was the Mother of all Contentions.

After one hundred and fifty years struggling, the Emperor had this account given him (a), That the Western Churches were kept quiet, but the Eastern were full of tumult. If we examine the Reason of the Former part of the assertion, and the Truth of the Latter, we find, that the Western Bishops were easier to be led by the great Bishop of Rome, not only by reason of the Greatness of his City, but by reason of the Smallness of their own Understandings; which were such, that at the Council of Ariminum, the greatest of all for number, they were circumvented by the Subtiler Greeks, and that so grossly saith the (b) Historian, that when it was proposed, whether they would worship Christ or *ὁμοῖον*, they cried they believed not in ho-

moousium, but Christ. As for the Later part of the assertion, the same Historian, ca. 2. says, that the Arians had all the Eastern Churches except that of Hierusalem.

3. The long and mischievous controversy was at last Settled by Theodosius; who having received his Instructions and Baptism from a Consubstantialist, required all his Subjects to conform to That Religion, which Peter the Prince of the Apostles from the beginning had delivered to the Romans, and which at That time Damasus Bishop of Rome and Peter Bishop of Alexandria held: and That Church only should be esteemed Catholick, which worshipped the Divine Trinity with equal Honour, and those who held the other, should be called Hereticks, made infamous and punished.

This we may therefore call Settling the controversy, because thenceforth all succeeding Emperors and Bishops wrote after this Copy; and both the parties have ever worn those Titles, which the Emperor by his Imperial Power (as the unquestionable Fountain of Honour) was pleased to bestow upon them.

Behold now the ground, on which one of our Fundamental Articles of Faith is Built! Behold the justice of That plea, which from such a possession would prescribe to our Belief! We have traced it from its Spring, with no worse intent than to appeal from the great Theodosius, who put it Above dispute, to the greater Constantine, who put it Below dispute; and to silence the clamour of Heresie against One party, by silencing the whole Controversie in Both.

And certainly, whoever shall carefully observe, how the now stablished Doctrine was from first to last advanced by gross partiality

(a) Sozomen. li. 7. ca. 4. (b) Ruffin. li. 1. c. 21.

of the most guilty kind, and at last imposed by a Novice Emperor, upon Implicit Faith in two Bishops, of whose Sees the One brought it into the World, and the Other maintained it, and a new coined Tradition lately obtruded by the guiltier of these Sees, but Unpleaded, because Unheard of, in those former Long and Miserable times, which it Might and Ought to have delivered from the convulsions they suffered: Whoever I say shall carefully observe this, and withal, what foul tricks the Church of *Rome* used in the West, and with what ill success in the East, whose Churches did at last more universally embrace *Arius's* opinion than at first they condemned it; may be tempted to number the *Athanasian* among the *Roman* Doctrines, and cannot but think it fairly dealt with, if (its boasted possession pardoned) it be left upon the same level with the *Arian* equally unworthy, not only of our Faith, but of our Study.

If further we consider (what the Historian expressly declareth) that at the rise of this controversy, most of the Bishops understood not its meaning; we cannot think it necessary to Salvation, that every private Christian should believe That as an Article of Faith, which the best Ages of the Church thought not worth knowing.

And if Bishop *Alexander* himself, the first Author of the Nicety, and Head of the party, thought fit to tolerate the opposite *Arians* (as the same Historians aver,) we can ill pretend to Charity, if we allow them no Title to Gods Pardon, or his Churches Communion.

And more or less than this we pretend not: we retort not *Theodosius's* sentence of Heresie, Infamy, or Punishment; we accuse none but the Uncharitable of either side; nor mention Blasphemy, but only to perswade Silence, as the securest way to escape it; or Heresie, but

only as a warning to Hold with the Primitive Christians and Martyrs, who departed this World before this unhappy question came in our ears, and live a Witness Dispute.

The *Athanasians* nor Polytheists hold more than do the *Arians*: In both Positions seem to infer it, they deny the Consequence; if this contradict the rules of Reasoning, they avow it, for they allow Reason no heading in *Mysteries* of Faith. If this make them *Hereticks*, it is not in Religion, but in Logick.

On the other side, the *Arians* profess to believe of Christ whatever himself or his Apostles have spoken; and where one expression in Scripture seemeth to contradict another, they take such a course to reconcile them, as the Laws and Customs of all the World direct. It is very frequent for Rhetorick to Exceed, but never to Diminish the Grammatical character of a person, whose honour the writer professeth to advance; and upon this account they think it more reasonable, that those expressions which exalt our Saviours Person to an Equality with the Father, should stoop to those which speak him Inferior; than, that those which speak him Inferior, should be Strained up to those which speak him Equal: And however, this is the Safer way, since it will lead us to such a belief as will Suffice for That end, for whose sake alone Belief it self is required.

He that so believeth in Christ, as the Traveller doth in the Light, that with confidence in his Promises ordereth every step by the direction of his Precepts, knowing that no Ordinary, much more no Wise and Good man, will condemn those Means as insufficient, which effect the End for whose sake they are Prescribed; will not doubt, but his diligence in his gracious Lord's Service will obtain his Pardon for any sincere error, though it fall short of full payment of Due honour to his

Person; yea, he will believe, that to think otherwise, were an error more Unpardonable, because more Dishonourable, to That Justice and Goodness, which make his chief character.

Yea, if from his Clemency in Pardoning, we turn to his Justice in Punishing; either party may in That Court plead for Justification.

This is the sum of the Promises given by our Lord to such as believe in him. He that so believeth in Him as the Traveller doth in the Light, shall in the end as certainly attain Eternal Life, as the Traveller doth his Journeys end; though concerning our Lord's Person he may be as much mistaken, as the Ignorant, but Industrious Traveller, who knoweth nothing of the Greatness of the Sun's Body, or the Nature of its Light. For as the End when Accomplished, justifieth the Means to be Sufficient; so a Divine Life justifieth the Faith that Worketh it, and the Person that Hath it.

But Faith cannot produce This Effect, further than it proceedeth from the Person to his Words; which therefore only are believed to be True, because the Speaker is believed to be Faithful.

We must therefore proceed to enquire, What are those Sayings of our Lord, which upon the credit of his Person, Saving Faith is to believe in order to Eternal Life?

Chap. X. *Of the WORD or Matter which is the Object of Faith.*

Thus far we have considered the PERSON in whom we are to believe: Come we now to the other object of Faith, the WORD or Matter, which we must take upon credit of that Person. This maketh more trouble in the World than its difficulty requireth. The disagreements of the Reformed among themselves is a scandal to the Romanists, who thence infer, That there is no rest but in the Bosom of their Church, which will embrace none who do not submit their understandings to her Decrees. The Reformed, beside Recrimination, (which is perhaps a Sufficient, but not Honourable plea,) answer, that their disagreements concern not *Fundamental*, but only *Indifferent* truths. Hereupon the Romanists call for a Catalogue of Fundamentals: and did they do it sincerely, Charity would require a compliance with the demand; but as long as they profess themselves obliged to believe all the determinations of their Council of *Trent*, it is plain, that such a List would do them no other service, but to be cast as a bone of contention among those, who according to the Largeness or Slightness of their minds, judge more or Fewer Articles necessary.

Our excellent *Dr. Hammond*, to silence the clamorous with a just character of a *Fundamental*, hath written an express Treatise, discovering that the word importeth Relation to a *Building*, which must be thereupon superstructed; and since holiness of life is the Building, every Article of Faith must be just so far Fundamental, as it supporteth That Building. This is a Great Truth; but how Insufficient for our Satisfaction, needeth

no other evidence than the admirable Doctor's own Enumeration, which every one will not receive for adequate: It is like an Advertisement in a Gazette, which however Exact, cannot secure me from Mistake, if I meet the Man described.

We shall therefore shew, not only the Marks, but the Person; not only such Qualifications as are necessary to make a Truth worthy to be matter of Faith; but those individual Truths, which our Lord hath expressly advanced above all their Fellows to that Dignity.

I. The Qualifications for Matter of Faith must be principally these,

1. It must be *Easie to be understood by the meanest Capacity.* To the Poor the Gospel was preached, and by such it must be understood, that it may be Believed. Beside plain Justice, which will not Reap where it hath not Sown; beside what we have heard of the Apostle's Boast, that the *light of the Gospel cannot be hid, but to those whose eyes are not only Dimm'd, but quite Blinded;* and of his Jealousie, lest the *Corinthians* minds should be corrupted from the *Simplicity which is in Christ*: Beside these and other Evidences, it is worth Observation, that the same Apostle in his Epistle to the *Romans*, wherein he disputeth against the Jews, in behalf of the *Righteousness which is by Faith*, as opposed to that which is by the *Law*, is careful to prevent any Conceit, that the Matter of Faith was more Obscure than that of the Law; and therefore *ch. 10. v. 6. &c.* he reciteth the Boast of *Moses*, *Deut. 30. 12.* applying them to Faith in Christ: No Height, nor Depth, nor Distance of any kind, putteth it out of reach; it is not only in our Eye, but in our Mouth; and to put the Truth beyond suspicion, in the *9th Verse* he giveth us a plain account both of Person and Matter: *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine*

heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; and this (saith he) is the word of Faith which we preach. By which and the following words it is plain, that Apostle was so far from thinking it an Honour, that he judged it a great Defect, if there were any Difficulty in Matter of Faith.

It is true, he speaketh with much amazedness in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, of a great Mystery, which (yet) though it seemed hard to him to be believed, is easie enough to be understood; for it signified only this, That the Gentiles were Fellow heirs of the Promises with the Jews: And when he instructeth *Timothy* how to behave himself in the House of God, he telleth him of the *great Mystery of Godliness*, which concerneth only the Person to be believed in, but not the Matter to be believed. And in no other word of Scripture do we meet the least Intimation of any Boast or Confession, that Faith hath any hard Task for the the Understanding to perform.

2. It must be *an express Word of God*; so saith the Apostle in the *17th Verse*, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* And so saith the very Nature of Faith: It is Justice to God's Veracity, and therefore can have nothing to do, where there is no *Word* to believe.

It must not be denied, but plain Reason is another Word of God; and therefore what that inferreth by incontestable Consequence from a written word, must be received with a Belief equal to the Evidence of that Consequence: But if the Relation between the written Word and rational Consequence be so remote, that not only a skilful Herald can derive its Pedigree; then is a good Christian no more obliged to believe such an Inference, than is every good Subject to be a good Herald.

That our Lord trebled his Command upon St. Peter, to feed his Lambs, we believe with utmost assurance, because we find it in the written Word, and thence infer that he gave him Authority and Power to preach the Gospel, instead of his former employment in Fishing, because plain reason inferreth, that he could not otherwise perform the Office of a good shepherd; but that he thereby commissioned, not only St. Peter in Person, but all his successors in the See of Rome, to rule all Persons and Nations, that in all Ages shall be of Christ's Flock, with as absolute Power as a Shepherd doth his Sheep, and that all the Flock must obey him with the same tameness as the Sheep do their shepherd: This can therefore be no matter, either of Faith or Reason, because the Consequence is beyond the ken of any Eye or Telescope.

3. Matter of Faith, properly so called, must not only be expressly revealed, but Expressly honoured with the Promise of eternal Life to the Believer: For though all God's Words be Equally (because Infinitely) True; yet are not all equally Gospel. That St. Paul left his Cloak behind him, and wrote to a Bishop to bring it after him, we believe with as much Confidence, but not with as much Deference, as that Christ died and rose again. Our Saviour preached many Moral Truths, which (yet) were not properly Matters of Christian Faith, because the World was acquainted with them before Christ appeared in it. We must therefore carefully distinguish between what is written, and what is Gospel: and that to the Gospel only, and not to any other Truth, was given the Promise, Mark 16 15. Go ye into all the world, and reach the Gospel to every Creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. It is to the Gospel, and to the Gospel alone, that this Saving and Damning Power is given

by our Saviour; and therefore whoever ascribeth it to any other Doctrine, however true, yea, however revealed, maketh himself Equal to Christ in Authority, and Superior in Faithfulness: Equal in Power, by Granting or Denying Salvation; and Superior in Faithfulness, by discovering some way to Salvation, and some Danger of Damnation, which our Lord left undiscovered; and consequently, leaving every sincere Believer in danger to perish without Fault. For then, whoever doubteth or Disbelieveth the Additionals, though he believe all that our Lord hath required, (which are no small nor mean part of Christians,) must perish, not for straying from the Faith, but for want of a Faithful Shepherd.

And here I cannot but repeat my former complaint, That in the midst of such hot Disputes concerning the very Principles of our Religion, the most obvious and most important Remarks are neglected. In the Disputes concerning Justification by Faith, we found St. Paul might be reconciled with St. James in that question; in the same manner as with Himself, in the Promise he had made of every Man's escape, with the Warning he afterward gave of their Danger, if the Mariners went off; the one and the other equally accounted for, by a plain Rule, that All Promises imply whatever is necessarily supposed. And in the Matter now before us, we have another, and (if possible) a greater Blunder of the same kind. Nothing can be more Obvious, Important, or Neglected, than this (not Remark for our Reason, but) plain Matter of Fact; that there are Some Truths offered to our Belief by our Lord and his Apostles, With a Promise annexed, and others without any such Promise; and from this undeniable and unavoidable Truth, these Corollaries will force themselves upon us.

1. There

1. *There can be no need of an Interpreter of Scripture, or Determiner of Doubts concerning matters of Faith.* For if those words of Scripture, which inform us of what is *Necessary to be believed*, be so plain and so often repeated, that no Man can miss their true meaning; then every Man's own Faculties are so far Infallible, as to put him out of danger; and if any other Word of Scripture be doubtful, there is no harm if it remain so still; but if any, out of meer love to truth, sincerely labour to find it out in all its corners; his Endeavours will be accepted, and his Mistakes (if he fall into any) will be pardoned.

2. *The Scriptures cannot be denied to be Sufficient*, though they may have suffered the common Fate of all long-lived Books, by Carelessness of Copiers, Fraud of Hereticks, or Dust of Time.

Many of the Apostles Writings (doubtless) are lost; but that hindereth not the Sufficiency of those which we enjoy: yea, if all the rest of the Scripture were lost, but only those Texts which proclaim those Truths, to the Belief whereof eternal Life is promised; those few Texts would be sufficient. Nor doth this slacken our Obligation to Thankfulness for the rest; for as it is in Temporals, so it is in Spirituals; God's Bounty is not measured by our bare Necessities; he is *Rich towards us*, supplying us not only with Necessaries, but Conveniences; not only Bread of Life to keep us from Perishing, but many other Truths to feast our Curiosities, wherein (yet) as in corporal repasts, he requireth Sobriety.

3. *We need not, ought not to be uncharitable to any who differ from us in other Doctrins, to the Belief whereof the Promise is not appropriate*, especially if they agree with us in those, to which it is so. We are sure that they are *Heirs with us of the same Promise*; and if we hate them who love God, and

are by him beloved, such Uncharitableness is both a greater Error and a greater Crime, than their Mistakes in doubtful things can be.

4. And which is now in our Eye; *There can be no need of a Catalogue of Fundamentals*, because the Scripture hath particularly enumerated what Truths are necessarily to be believed.

Did not our Eyes compel us to it, we should hardly think it possible, that any who had the least acquaintance with the *N.T.* could escape the discovery of so plain a Truth. When we therein find a Doctrine treated like *Mordecai*, with a Proclamation before it, *Bow the knee, Thus it shall be done to the truth which the Lord delighteth to honour*; and others left in the Street, among the vulgar Truths of Natural Religion; what reason can doubt, which of these are Saving Truths, and which Indifferent?

Should *Abasuerus's* Officers have set up or suffered *Any others*, much more should they have suffered *Many others*, to have rode in the same level cheek by jole with Him, had not this deprived both *Mordecai* of his Honour, and the King of his Obedience? and would not the Cavalcade have been so much the more Criminal, by how much it had been greater? How comes it then to pass, that those Truths which our Lord hath exalted above all others with the like singular Honour, should be levelled with others which are so far from any such Marks of his Favour, that he hath left them unregarded, and disputable, whether they be Truths or Errors?

I know no way to unriddle so strange a *Phanomenon*, but by that common saying, *Inter arma silent leges*. There hath been so much disputing about Questions, that we have not heeded things Unquestionable; though that would as certainly bring Peace to our Minds, as the Law would to

the State, if they might be paid their due.

Those who are forbidden the use of their Bibles are excusable; but those who dare read them, must needs think themselves obliged to *Search the Scriptures, for in them they think they have eternal Life, and they are they which testifie of the Doctrines* which are promised it.

The Task is every way very Easie; it will require very little Pains, and no Art. The meanest Beggar in the Street understood the King's mind concerning *Mordecai*; and so may any Man that will heed what are those Truths which are honoured with a Proclamation of eternal Life; and besides, we are more concerned to heed such a Proclamation.

We have already observed, that the Apostle plainly told the Romans, *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.* Do we in the whole New Testament find any other Doctrin so honoured? We again meet the same more pompously proclaimed, *1 Cor. 15. I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, if you have not believed in vain.* Then cometh the same Truth, with somewhat of the same Pomp, *That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he rose again according to the Scriptures.*

It will be objected, That this cannot be the Faith which our Lord so importunately called for, because this was not performed till after the time of his Preaching was past: Let us observe *Mark 16. 14. He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of Heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every Creature, He that*

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. The Command coming in the same breath with the Reproof, plainly intimateth, that the *Gospel* which they must preach, was the same which themselves had been so backward in believing. However *Luke 24. 46.* both his Resurrection and his Promise are made matter of Faith; *For he said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoveth Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remission of sins should be preached in his name among all Nations; and ye are witnesses of these things.*

That the Apostles took the last of these words for the sum of their Commission, appeareth by what they said and did after the death of Judas, *Acts 1. 21. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, — must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his Resurrection.* And accordingly throughout the rest of that Book, do we always find them insist upon this, as the main of their business.

In the former half of these words doth our Lord argue it necessary, that his Death and Resurrection should be foretold and performed, that Repentance and Remission of Sins might be preached in his name, *i. e.* as by him promised; and by his own Resurrection secured; for the Remission which the Prophets had promised, reached no further than Temporal Punishment; but that which Christ promised reached after Death to everlasting Life.

This is plain by the Apostle's Discourse abovementioned, which as he closeth with a Triumph over Death, *the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, so he buildeth the assurance of our own victory upon that of Christ; If the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised, and if Christ be raised, your Faith*

Faith is vain, you are yet in your sins. If the Consequence be good one way, it is so the other: If the Being in our Sins follow from the denial of Christ's Resurrection, then must Remission of Sins import Resurrection from Death. Both of them depend upon the Relation between Sin and Death. *The Sting of death is sin*; and again, *the wages of sin is Death*; and therefore a full and perfect Remission of Sin, cannot but import a full and perfect Deliverance from Death.

So the Sum total of the Gospel, which our Saviour himself preached in his Lifetime, and commissioned his Apostles to preach after his Resurrection, is this, That those who believe in him, shall upon Repentance have such a full Pardon of Sin, as to be delivered from Death; and that Christ who hath promised this, hath given us an Earnest of it, by rising himself from the Dead.

There is indeed an under-truth or so, which is pressed upon our Belief as Ne-

cessary. For the Apostle telleth the *Galatians*, *If you be circumcised Christ profiteth you nothing, you are fallen from Grace, you are debtors to the whole Law.* This I call an Under-truth, because it implieth a Belief of Benefits promised by Christ, part whereof was a *New Covenant*, better than that of *Moses*: This we heard promised by the Prophet, and insisted on by the Writer to the *Hebrews*, as the Character of the Gospel; but was so far from being by our Lord honoured with a Promise of Eternal Life, that the Apostles themselves doubted of it, till the Holy Ghost had decided it in Council.

Nor is this an Exception to our Rule, that it is beyond the Power of all the Men in the World, yea, or of all the Angels in Heaven, to make any thing an Article of Faith, which the Holy Scriptures have not made so, by annexing to them the Promise of Eternal Life, which therefore we now find to be it self no less the *Master* than the *Reward* of Faith.

C H A P. XI.

Of the manner of the Resurrection, whether in the same Body or another:

THAT a Resurrection from the Dead is the proper Matter of the Christian Faith, we have (I hope) sufficiently proved: but concerning the Manner thereof, it doth not so plainly appear what we are to believe. The Apostle, in that solemn Diatribe, that he might leave nothing untouched, advanceth either a Question or an Objection in the 35th Verse; *But some man will say, how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?* If an Objection, it may be thus urg'd; the Dead are so buried, that it seems utterly impossible their Bodies should be restored: Princes many times have their Bowels buried at great distance from their

Limbs, some whole Nations burn their dead, many are drown'd in the Sea, where they are devoured by Fishes, those Fishes again by others, which perhaps come to the Market and feed other Men; and by many other ways are the Particles so dispers'd, that it seems utterly impossible to retrieve them.

If this be objected against the Truth of Resurrection, the roughness of the Apostle's Answer will be just; they are Fools in doubting God's Omnipotency: all these or whatever other Changes any man's Body may undergo, are not greater than the Chymist makes in his Mercury, which yet again he easily recalls to his form. He that

that

that made all things of nothing, can by the same powerful Word command every Particle to its proper Body; nor is he less a Fool who doubts whether God will do this if he have promised it; because it is possible for God to perform such a Promise, but it is not possible he should break it. But if the Question be, Whether God has promis'd this, so that we do not doubt either his Power or his Veracity, but only our own apprehension of the meaning of his Word; this doth not impeach any of God's perfections, but only our own understanding: it cannot be Injustice against God, whom in the midst of such doubts we undoubtingly believe to be infinitely true: but it is justice to our own understandings, which we do not only believe, but know to be fallible. If therefore we find the same Words vulgarly used in another Sense, more agreeable to plain Reason and God's Perfections; then may we easily enquire, first, *Whether any promise of God does necessarily import a restitution of the same numerical matter?* if not, then may we proceed to enquire, secondly, *Whether it be honourable to God, and more serviceable to the Designs of the Gospel, that we believe the contrary?*

First, *Whether the Word of Promise necessarily imports a Restitution of the same numerical matter?* This is fully and clearly answered, as soon as in common speaking we find the same Words used in a less rigid sense: but if we observe how the Apostle himself hath answered this very Question, the least that we thence learn is this, That such a meaning is not matter of Faith, since he hath left it doubtful, and the contrary more probable: for thus he answers, *Thou Fool, thou knowest not the body that shall be, but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him, and to every seed its own body.* Does not this plainly deny a Resurrection of the same numerical Particles? Thou knowest a little

single Grain, which when it is corrupted, riseth in Root, Stalk, Blade, Ears, and Grains, thousands of times more in matter than was sown; God giving the body, and yet to every Seed its own. What consequence can thence be clearer than this, That every one may at the Resurrection receive his own Body, tho' it be not the same that was buried?

And we may yet farther consider, that this is the constant way of Nature in all living Bodies, which we reckon the same while they keep the same Forms, tho' they change every Particle of Matter: Grant therefore, that those Words of *Job, Tho' worms consume this flesh, yet with these eyes shall I see God,* express his confidence of a Resurrection; yet will they signify no more than this, That tho' perspiration consume every atom of my Flesh, yet shall my Eyes be as much the same, and see as well, as if there were no change in them; and if there be no more required from other Topicks than from the Letter of the Promise, we are at liberty to believe what shall seem most probable. The usual Arguments are two; first, from God's Justice, and secondly, from the Serviceableness of the Belief.

First, it is argued, *That it is just that the same Body which was sharer in the Sin or the Service, should also be sharer in the Punishment or Reward.* But if we will speak properly, the Body hath no share either in the one or the other; for Matter neither acteth nor perceiveth, but the Soul by the matter. 2 Cor. 5. the Apostle likens our Body to an House, and to Cloaths; the Man dwells in the one, and moves in the other, yet neither the one nor the other shares Life with him; and therefore to argue, that it must be the same Body that shall receive Punishment at the Resurrection, is the same as to say, the Malefactor must be Executed in the same Cloaths wherein

wherein he committed the Crime.

So many years past between the Injuries which *Joseph* received from his Brethren, and the Honors which he received from *Pharaoh*, and thereby his whole body was so changed, that his Brethren knew him not; and there were yet greater Changes both in His and Their Bodies, before their Father's Death; yet were not their Consciences changed, but in their Old Age they feared his Revenge for the Cruelties of their Youth: and if humane Justice punish an old Crime, tho' between the Act and the Discovery every Particle of the Body be chang'd, because the same Soul makes him the same Person; how can we doubt but Divine Justice may at the Resurrection do the same?

Secondly, *Whether it be more honourable to God to believe the one or the other*, is the same as to ask, *Whether it be more honourable to save all his Perfections, or to rob one that we may cloath the other?* If we so believe, as to magnifie God's Veracity in performance of his Promise, and his Justice in distributing Rewards and Punishments; will it not more justifie his Wisdom, to believe that he will act suitably to that order of Things which himself hath established, than that he will unaccountably exercise his Omnipotency? It is not (we confess) it is not for silly Men to prescribe Rules for God's Wisdom in its particular acts: but we must have a clear and distinct Definition of the Nature of Wisdom in general, otherwise we pay him but an empty Word when we ascribe that Perfection to him, and we might as much honor him by saying he is Unwise. Now, that Definition whereby we understand Wisdom, importeth a choice first of a good End, and then of suitable Means: if therefore the means be unsuitable, either in Kind or Proportion, that will make a defect in Wisdom. Should we see a Man

yoke a whole Plough of Oxen, to draw a weight which a Child could carry in one of his hands, we should certainly think him better furnished with Cattel than Understanding: and to believe that God will by his Omnipotency work as many Miracles as he shall raise Bodies, when all his Promises may be as well verified, and all his good Ends as well promoted in a way less miraculous, must be no less a Diminution of his Wisdom than Exaltation of his Power, since all that exercise of Power which tends to no good purpose, is vain and impertinent.

Let us then consider to what purpose is the Resurrection promis'd, and our Belief of it requir'd? The Apostle hath proclaim'd two especially, first, *That our joy might be full*; and secondly, that we may partake God's Nature.

I. The Resurrection is therefore promised *that our joy may be full*: and If we consider the Strength of Wishes, and the Faintness of Hopes, which Mankind without Christ laboured under; we may thence compute how great a joy the Promise may bring to a longing mind. The Words of *Seneca*, in his 102. *Epist.* gives us a good Hypotyposis of it: *I took pleasure to debate upon the Eternity of Souls, nay more, I was fully resolved therein; for I easily believed the Opinions of great Men rather promising than proving so great a matter. I gave my self over to this so great hope, and now grow hateful to my self; and now contemn the Reliques of my broken Years; being ready to be transferred into that immeasurable time and possession of that infinite Eternity, when as suddenly I was awakened by the Letter, which made me dismiss so sweet a Dream, which hereafter I will revive and redeem again as soon as I shall have satisfied thy expectation.* Such were the feeble Flutterings of the best humane Wisdom, wanting the Goy

The strength of their Wishes raised them a little towards Hope; but wanting support, quickly fell back again to Fear; so their Joy was no better than Suspence, none of the easiest postures.

In two respects especially was their Joy defective; 1. *Want of Confidence to the Persons from whom they received the Promises;* and 2. *Scantness of the Happiness promised.*

1. They had no confident *Belief in the Persons*, whom the Philosopher calleth indeed *Great Men*, but complaineth that they *proved not what they promised*. They were Great, not by Nature or Commission, but by Study; had no better Warrant for their promises, than what were dictated by partiality to their own Wishes, not the least pretence of Power to make them good. But the Author of the Gospel is a Person not only Great, but infinite; and no less so in Power, than Faithfulness; so that there is no place for the least distrust.

2. Another, (and to the present purpose more considerable,) defect of human hopes was in the *Scantness of expected happiness*; it was Immortality indeed, but a Carnal one. They pretend to answer *Job's* complaint, by equalling a dead man's hopes to those of a Tree, which springs again when it is cut down; but they had no thoughts of such a Harvest as the Apostle promiseth. And that the hopes of the Pharisees were no better than those of the Philosophers, seemeth plain from that objection, wherewith the Sadduces pretended to grieve our Saviour: For it cannot be reasonably imagined, but amidst so long Conversation, and so many Disputes, as had sawed that question between them; the Pharisees must needs have better informed them, if themselves had understood the difference between the Present Life and the Future.

And now that our Lord hath so plainly

revealed that we shall be *ἰσὺν ἰσῶν*, equal to the Angels, that his Apostle hath no less plainly declared, that our Lord will *change our vile Bodies, that they may be like his own Glorious Body*; that the Resurrection shall make great and glorious variety of Changes; from Natural, to Spiritual, from Weak, to Powerful, from Corruptible, to Incorruptible, &c. That we should still be so fond of our load of Carrion, as to think it a diminution of our happiness, if we be not again yoked to the same dead matter; seemeth no less a contradiction to the desires of Nature, than to the Promises of Scripture. This (say some) will be the joy of the Resurrection, that the two old Friends meet and embrace each other. But a little consideration will answer, that such a meeting would not be of old Friends but of old Enemies. How can we read the 7th Chapter to the Romans, and find there described the *War between the Flesh and the Spirit*? How can we hear that sad cry, *Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this Body of Death!* yet think it matter of joy to be remanded to it again? Do we not find him often exhorting to *mortifie our members which are upon the earth*; and doth he not propose himself for example, *beating down his body and keeping it in subjection, lest he should be cast away*? Or is the Apostle singular in this notion? doth not Natural Religion agree with the Christian, and Experience with both, that Virtue is nothing else but a War against the Body in behalf of the Mind?

Either the Soul shall at the Resurrection have a remembrance of her late dead Body, and the old conversation she had with it or she shall not: If she shall not, then there can be no more joy if she meet the same Old Flesh, than if all be New: But if she do remember her old Mate, and her old Conversation with it; then must she remember all the Contentions she had with it,

it, all the Wounds she received from it, all the Dangers which she hardly escaped by watching against it; and it seemeth very strange that the Soul at the Resurrection should find much matter of Joy in that Flesh, as it's greatest Friend, which did it's most, and had not Gods goodness assisted, would have prevailed, to make Resurrection it self infinitely miserable.

However, by our Present Thoughts let us judge of our Future. Were it put to our choice whether we would continue in the same Flesh, however exalted in accidents; or translated into another, which would not have the least Particle the same, but such Properties as should equal us with Angels; should we so regard our Dead Senseless Matter, as to make the least difficulty of shifting it? should we have such stupid fondness for our coarse nasty Rags, as in love to them to refuse Robes of Glory? Our Matter feels no more than do our Cloaths, and our Souls in such exchange, can feel nothing but excess of Joy in her new Robes: so that from this Topick will spring no necessity, that we should believe what we cannot rejoyce in.

II. Another great design of the Gospel, or rather the same in another dress, is this, That we may *have fellowship with God*, which St. Peter more plainly paraphraseth, saying *For this reason are given to us great and precious Promises that by them we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature*. Since therefore all the force which the Promises have towards effecting this good end, is derived from the Joy which shall reward them who are invited by such Promises to such Godliness: If we believe the Promises in such a sense as maketh them most Desireable; we

thereby exercise such a Faith, as is most Serviceable to that Adequate End, for which the Promises are Given and Faith required.

And the difference in this respect is so small between the two Opinions, that no considering Person will abate his diligence in Gods Service, if he believe he shall be blessed with a Body so Glorious, so Vigorous, so every Way better than this, that he cannot have the least wish it should be the same.

In short therefore, this is not matter of Faith, but Curiosity. That we believe, that the faithful shall have a Resurrection to happiness greater than they can ask or think; This is therefore matter of Faith, because our Lord himself hath made it so, declared it to be the very reason of his coming into the World, and commanded his Apostles to preach it as his Gospel. This if we so believe, as thence to proceed to the Apostles most Rational and Godly inference, to be *stedfast and immoveable, alway abounding in the work of the Lord for as much as our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; we have then both *Matter and Soul of Faith*, and may securely rely on Gods faithfulness to perform his promise in the best manner.

AND now we have very Amply, and perhaps very Tediously, dissected That half of the Gospel, which filleth whole Libraries with Books of impertinent Subtilties. Whatever is disputed concerning any point of Religion (falsly so called) pretendeth to convince us of what we ought to believe in That Particular. But one or two General Aphorisms discovering Why and How far Belief it self is required, will silence all those endless (every way endless) Disputes. This so beneficial and neglected Work, we have endeavoured to perform

by dissecting the whole Mystery of the Gospel.

That its business was to reduce the Jews from their Bondage under the Law of *Moses*, and the Gentiles from their worse Bondage under the Worship of Devils, to the Service of God by the free Directions of their own Nature: That to this end he *sent his only begotten Son into the World*; teaching them that the best Service of God consisteth in being like him; and for their encouragement therein, promising them upon Repentance Pardon of Sins past, and everlasting Life. And because those Promises could no otherwise be effectual, Faith must necessarily be called for, with importunity suitable, both to the Difficulties and Dangers which at that Time encompassed it, and to the Serviceableness which at all Times accompanieth it.

This is the Sum of the Gospel: a Chain of Benefits let down from Heaven, worthy of God to bestow, of Angels to admire, and of Man to rejoice in. In this Chain, the only Link which Man can reach, is Faith, and its whole worth consists in its connexion with the rest, and it's easiness to be laid hold on.

And since it is incongruous that the Means should be more difficult than the End; it cannot be, that Faith should be more above the reach of an honest Mind, than the Holiness which it is to serve.

No; it was first preached to the Poor, and where-ever it came, was first and best entertained by Such; it's one Learned Apostle renounced the *words which Mans Wisdom teacheth*, and fell into jealousy lest his Disciples *minds should be corrupted with knowledge falsely so called*; and whether he had reason will appear by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY II.

What Changes or Additions later Ages have made in Matter of Faith?

THIS we proposed as a *second* Enquiry: but it is not so properly an ENQUIRY as a Muster; They are so Numerous and so Obvious, stand so thick in our way, and so justle us on every side, that it will not be difficult to find them, but to Range them into order.

The *General* change, which leadeth all the rest, is the change of its *Place*. It is unlinked from the *Chain* wherein it is inestimably serviceable; and treated in its *single* separate Nature, as if it were some precious Diamond, valuable for Brightness, Hardness, or other irrelative Virtue of its own.

We find our Lord honour it, as the great King did *Daniel* above all his Princes; we hear him declare, that himself came into the World to advance it therein, we hear him promise it Eternal Life; we hear both Him and his Apostle make it half the Gospel; we meet it in every Page of the New Testament; and upon sight of its so great Glory, we talk as *St. Peter* did, when confounded at the Brightness of our Lords Rayment and Countenance, *he knew not what he said*.

We consider not, that two of the Reasons which induced our Lord to call so importunately for it, are by his good providence

providence not only expired, but turned to the contrary point, and its now adequate worth is its Serviceableness. It may boast as did the Vine in *Jotham's* Parable, of *cheering God and man*, but it is by its Wine, not by its Timber. By This, it can neither support its own feeble Limbs, nor furnish a Pin whereby to fasten them to the Wall, where they are not worthy to hang but for the Fruits sake.

Should our Lord require more of it than is serviceable, then must he require the Overplus without reason; and this would speak him not a Good and Wise, but Humersom and Capricious Lord: so by the same proportion as we Exalt the Dignity of Faith above its Usefulness, we must Depress the Honour of our Saviour.

This therefore is the Mother-error, that whereas Faith is no better than a Retainer to Holiness, we place it in the Throne as an Independent absolute Prince. This I say is the Mother-error, and is parent of two others: For we think it our Duty to such a Prince, to make it as great as possible: 1. by *enlarging its Dominion as far*, and 2. by *exalting its Pre-rogative as high as we can*; and so we overdo Truth in both.

I. *We extend the Empire of Faith as far as possible*; not only beyond its proper bounds, but beyond All bounds whatsoever. *Brasidas*, when asked how far the Territories of *Sparta* reached? answered, as far as I can cast my Lance; and a Romanist, if asked, how far matter of Faith is extended? will answer, as far as the Pope shall declare any thing to be *de fide*. And that this may reach far and wide enough, the School-men have employed their Inventions, to make discoveries of such Questions, and entangled them with

such Objections, as may seem Worthy and necessary to be defined. By this art have we gotten a vast Army of new Doctrins of Faith; and the Gospel, of whose Simplicity the greatest of the Apostles gloried, is become a Science of all others most perplexed. Our Modern Theology hath so much more of Metaphysics than of the Gospel, that in defiance to *St. Paul*, who boasted that the light of the Gospel was so bright, as not to be hid to any but such as had their eyes blinded by the God of this World; we may say of it as *Aristotle* did of the Science into which it is moulded, *it is so published as not to be published*, since there is hardly a word in it, whose full meaning is thoroughly understood.

Where the best eye can discover nothing but limpid liquor, the Microscope findeth a multitude of little Animals; and where a plain understanding apprehendeth a clear truth, there a disputatious Schoolman findeth a multitude of little Doctrins, as useles as those Animals: The unhapy difference is, that the Microscope pretendeth no more but to spring Game for our Curiosity; but the Schools impose their Dictates upon our Faith, not only as Worthy to be Known, but Necessary to be Believed.

It is not sufficient for the Bishop of *Rome* to set up for an Oracle; he pretendeth not only to declare what is True, but to Change the very Nature of Truth, by making That matter of Faith, which before was only matter of Curiosity; and thereby under the Title of Vicar of Christ, claimeth a power to destroy the Souls for whose Salvation Christ died. For whenever a new matter is made *de fide*, it is thereby made destructive to as many as cannot conform their Belief to

the Pope's Judgment. Had it not been disputed, it had not had any need to be so defined; and those who before opposed it upon what they took for good reason, cannot now find That reason the weaker; so the fruit of the Decision is only This, That the belief which before was Innocent, is now become Damnable.

They seem indeed to make ample amends, by the implicit Faith which they say will avail for the common People, to whom it shall be sufficient to believe as the Church believeth, though they neither Understand, nor so much as Hear of any Article of Faith, which by this Salvo are so far from being Multiplied, that they are Annihilated.

But 1. *Where are we commanded to believe thus implicitly in the Church?* and 2. *What is such a Faith good for?*

1. *Where doth our Lord require this implicit Faith in the Church?* He said (indeed) as he had reason, *Ye believe in God, believe also in Me*: But where did he say, *Ye believe in Me, believe also in my Church?* and

2. *To what purpose should he so command?* How is any man inspirited to Holiness, by believing he knoweth not what? What Fear or Love of God can be kindled, what Comfort or Joy advanced, what motive to Godliness actuated, by such an *uncertain sound*? Yea further, why must the Church in General, believe more than every Member in Particular?

We dispute not about words, and therefore grant the Church to be the Pastors; but still we ask, Why is it necessary even for Them, to believe more than our Lord himself required? If such a belief be worth a Command, shew us wherein that worth consisteth, and you will at the same shew our Lord to be defective

in omitting such a Command: But if it have in it nothing worth commanding, then those who Impose it, do at once Invade our Lord's Legislative Power, and Defeat his gracious Purpose, of saving all that believe what himself required to be believed.

If there be any thing yet more intolerable, This perhaps may be so, That those who deny the Pope this imposing Power, assume it to themselves. *Heterodoxy* with them signifies no less danger, than doth *Heresie* with the Papists. They that want either Courage or Care to examine what they are taught, deny it to others; and as they believe without Reason, so do they without Measure.

If such a Man light upon truth in every little Question, he must be very happy, since they are contested with equal confidence on either side, mutually condemning each other as *Heterodox*, when indeed both sides are so; for the word properly signifieth such as hold other Opinions than the Word of God hath revealed, and such cannot be matter of Dispute.

II. They who thus extend the Dominions, do also *exalt the Prerogative of Faith*, above 1. *Measure*, 2. *Holiness*, 3. *Charity*, and 4. *Reason*.

1. *Those who extend its Dominions beyond its due limits, do also exalt its power above measure.* I say, *those who extend its Dominions beyond its due limits*: For within them we readily acknowledg its Power Absolute, and all Obedience due to it without reserve.

But the proper Dominions of Faith exceed not this one Proposition, that *God cannot ly*. This is the Great Commandment of the *Gospel*, and answereth the great one of the *Law*: as that saith thou shalt

thalt *Love*, so this faith thou shalt *Believe the Lord thy God with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might*: This, as it is a Truth of infinite Certainty, so must it have infinite Power upon our Belief, as we found it to have upon *Abrahams*, in defiance of all Oppositions that might have been made by Reason or Nature.

But there are other Truths, and those (perhaps) virtually included in this great One; the Belief whereof must be measured by the Interest they may have in the proper Vertue of Faith, which we have found to be twofold. 1. *Justice to Gods Veracity*, 2. *Serviceableness to Piety*.

1. Some Doctrins are the immediate Apparent Issue of that great Truth, so plainly published in the Word of God, that he that runneth may read them: Others require close Application, a good Eye, and perhaps, good Art too: Must all these Doctrins, so unequal in their Evidence, be received with equal, and that Supream Confidence?

If my confidence of the Truth of the Doctrin equal my Evidence that it is Gods Word, I make full payment of what is due to Gods Veracity: But if I doubt whether that which you tell me is Gods Word, be so indeed; this may be some defect of Justice to your Veracity, but it can be none to Gods: Convince me that God hath said it, and my Confidence of the Truth shall equal that Conviction; till then, neither is Gods Veracity, nor my Faith concerned.

2. Another Worth of Faith is derived from its Serviceableness to that great and good End, for whose sake the Promises are given us. And are those Doctrins which are imposed upon our Belief as *de fide*, are they all equally, all supremely Serviceable to Holiness? Are not some More, some Less, and most of them Not

at all so? And shall a Confidence equally Fruitless, Groundless, and Boundless, be accepted for my Justification, beyond a less Confident, but more Fruitful Belief, yea or doubt of a Proposition, of which I have no better reason to believe that it cometh from God, but this, that you tell me so?

In a Word, If for this End the Promises be give us, *That by them we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature* (as *St. Peter* expressly affirms) then he that receiveth them, and (which is more) he that receiveth any other Truths, with such an Effectual Faith, as shall transform him thereinto, receiveth them with Confidence enough.

II. Some exalt Faith *Above Holiness*, yea and *Against* it too. Not only the thorough-paced Antinomians and Solifidiâns, but many others, who call themselves Orthodox, finding no intrinsic Work, proportionable to the great price at which they find Faith valued; Wilfully or Hastily overlooking its relation to Holiness, borrow it a value from its relation to the Person of Christ, which no Man doubteth to be infinitely valuable. *Faith* (say they) *is the Hand whereby we apply Christ to our selves; and by this Application, Christ is made Ours, and His Righteousness imputed to us as if it were our own; and it justifieth not by his Own Worthiness, but by the Merit of Christ, which it layeth hold on and applyeth*: And by this prety Conceit, any Degree of Real inherent Righteousness is rendred not only Insufficient, but Dangerous; there is no more hope of the Lewdest Rakehell, than of a Moral Man; the preaching of the Church-of-England-Men is despised, because they Preach not Jesus Christ, nor Faith in him, but Moral Stuff, &c.

If Holiness of Life have any place among such Doctrins, Thanks must be paid

paid to Gods over-ruling Grace, and the deep Impressions of Natural Religion, not to be defaced by any opposite Nations: For if Christs Righteousness be imputed to me as if it were mine own, what need I Labour for any other? Will not all such Labour be worse than lost? Will it not cast dishonor upon Christs Righteousness as insufficient, and upon his Precepts, as Needless? Need I, Can I be more Righteous than Christ?

And where (in the Name of Christ) where do we in all the Book of God, or in Reason, meet any intimation of this fine Doctrin? *Application of Christ to our selves, the Hand of Faith, imputed Righteousness, &c.* What are they but terms of Art, invented by false Apostles? We read indeed that *Abrahams Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness*; and so shall it be imputed to us if we believe as He did: But still it was *Abrahams Own* proper Faith, and not Anothers; and that Faith was no less Obedient than Confident. But what is that to Christs Righteousness imputed to us, and that only by Virtue of laying hold upon him by an Application inverted? not by applying our Selves to Christ, conforming our selves to his Precepts and Example; but applying Him to our Selves, by meer forceable laying Hands upon him?

A certain Land was miserably wasted by a raging Plague: A great Physician in compassion to the People, came among them, declared that he had a *nosstrum* which never failed them that trusted it, that it had been to himself very costly, but he would freely communicate it to all that needed and desired it, and therefore exhorted every one to come to him for it. Many did so, and were infallibly cured; but others said, there needed no more, but to trust to the Medicine, the Physi-

an was infinitely skilful in his Art, and faithful in his Promises; that therefore by confidence in him they should have all his Health imputed to them, and that should Cure them as perfectly as if they received real Health by use of his Prescriptions. This is the very case now upon the Carpet: For look, how much the Sick Patient is cured by the imputed Health of the Physician, without a real remove of the Disease; just so much is such a Believer justified by the Righteousness of Christ imputed to him upon his confident applying of Christ to himself, with assurance of his being one of the Elect, without applying himself to Christ by conforming to his Nature and Commands.

Let us then for Christs Sake, let us apply our Selves to him with all Assurance of his Power and Desire to save us; and let this Confidence deliver us up to an absolute submission to his Conduct: But let us beware of trusting to his imputed Righteousness, without Real Holiness; lest we obtain only imputed Salvation, and fall into Real Condemnation. And on the other side, let us beware also that we rob him not of our due Acknowledgments: for what the Apostle saith of Faith in Abstract, is no less true of it in Conjunction with Holiness. *By Faith working by Love we are saved, and that, not of our Selves, it is the Gift of God.*

III. It is exalted above and against Charity, which it is its Duty and Honor to serve. We have found one of the great Ends of the Gospel to be the advancement of the Divine Life, whereof Charity is so great a part (if we may call it a Part) that however great and many Things are spoken of *Faith*, greater are spoken of *Love*. The Apostle is express in giving This the precedence, *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three, but the greatest of these*

's Charity. More yet, he plainly declareth that Faith dependeth on it for its saving power, *In Christ Jesus nothing availeth but Faith working by Love.* And that this work may reach not our Lord only, but our Brother too, he exhorteth the Ephesians to it by This Argument, *There is one Lord; one Faith, one Baptism:* But experience too plainly proveth, that whatever force *Unity of faith* may have for *Unity of Spirit in the bond of peace*; the same hath multiplication of Articles of Faith, for dividing of minds by Schifins and Feuds. For while the Christian World had but *one Faith*, their mutual Love was the wonder and envy of their Enemies: but from the time that it received Additional, and every new Doctrin became a new Religion, the mutual hatred of several Sects hath been no less wonderful.

For so much greater regard hath every one for his particular Belief (which he calleth his Religion) than for that General Faith wherein All agree; that his Neighbours Dissent therein, weigheth more Against Charity, than his Agreement in the greatest Truths can do for it.

The Good Emperors Argument was no less Unprosperous and Pious, whereby he endeavoured to cool the heat of the contending Parties, in the first and most uncharitable Dispute that ever rent the Christian World: *Philosophers*, said he, *though in many things they Differ, yet while they agree in the main, do not hate one another for their differences in Few things, but Love one another for their Agreement in the rest; and why should not We do so, who profess a more loving Religion?* If we seek the solution of this Riddle only from the nature of Faith, or from Scripture or Reason, we shall never get satisfaction; but as soon as we cast our eye upon the Interests and Pretences of the Church of Rome, we immediately meet it. For when

Doctrins are Multiplied and Entangled, and men wheedled into apprehensions that their Salvation dependeth upon their right belief in every one of them; then will they be glad to shelter their unsatisfied Consciences in the bosom of That Church, which promiseth them safety: But if any be so bold as to question That Fundamental, and thereby shake the power and greatness which is built upon it, however Slight the Matter of the question be, the very questioning of the Churches Determinations is damnable, the man is an Heretick, and as an Heretick he must be handled. He must be cast into the Inquisition-prison, there he must languish in Darknes and Nastiness, in Hunger and Cold, and all kinds of Misery, until the season come for an *Act of Faith*, (for by that Title they express their *Oyer and Terminer*, which is mostly but *triennial*;) then is the Wretch put upon his Trial, and if found Guilty, he is arrayed in a Coat painted with Fire and Devils, wherein he is burnt alive; and the people are made to believe, that after death he must suffer in Hell what is so represented in his Coat, and executed upon his Body; and he must lose what all other Malefactors enjoy, the charity of their Prayers.

This they call an *Act of Faith*, and is solemnly executed upon as many as that Holy Court of Inquisition can get into their Pounces.

God be blessed, those curst Cows have short Horns; That Court reacheth not all Countries, but the uncharitableness of Rome doth. There is no reproach so great as that of Heretick: to be out of the Bosom of the Church, is to be out of Gods Favour, he is hated of God, and must be so of all that love God.

Such is the effect of multiplying Articles of Faith.

IV. It is exalted above and against REASON: and so destroyeth the foundation whereon it self is built: For we have found this to be the essential Virtue of Faith, that it is Justice to Gods Faithfulness: and This is therefore most Just, because most Reasonable.

Nor is it less true in the retail: Nothing is to be believed further than Reason proveth it to be True. Our Lord himself appealed to it for the belief which he required: He pleaded his Miracles for Evidence, and thence claimed Judgment.

Yea, those who require us to renounce our Reason, appeal to it to themselves: For they pretend to give us reason why we should renounce it, and so contradict themselves no less than they do Reason. They are indeed no better than the ravings in *Bedlam* which we hear: It was a cast of *Tertullian's* Montanism which transported him into such extravagance as to say, *Credo quia impossibile est*. And the Author of *Religio Medici*, when he said, *There are not Contradictions enough in Religion for an Active Faith*, might have remember'd, that excess of Confidence in defect of Reason, is a certain Symptom of Madness.

It is true, in all Subjects, in all Arts and Sciences, Reason is pleaded for Error; but again it is confuted by greater Reason, as Stars are by the Sun, which baffleth and silenceth their weaker Light.

Abraham believed in Hope Against Hope. It appeared impossible in Nature that *Isaac* should be a Father after he were sacrificed: but it appeared more impossible, that God should lie, than that he should do more than Nature: What I know to be the Word of God, I believe infinitely, because I infinitely know God to be infinitely true: But that This is God's Word, and This the Meaning of it, I So far only believe, as I find Rea-

son for it: For as in Justice to God's revealed Word, I am bound to pay it my utmost belief; so in Justice to his Word written in my heart, I am to refuse my belief till some evidence make it appear due.

You say, Religion hath *Mysteries*; let us therefore consider what a *Mystery* is. In the Old Testament we find not the word: in the New, we find it consist of two parts; the One Open, the Other Secret. Sometimes it signifieth a Spiritual Truth wrapt up in a Sensible; thus the Union of Christ with his Church, is a Mystery contained in that of a Man with his Wife. Sometimes a truth hidden from some Ages; thus St. *John* proclaimeth the Gospel to have been *hidden from the beginning*, but then *made manifest*: Or from some Persons; thus our Lord saith to his Disciples, *to you is given to know the Mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables*.

And this is the most usual Sense of the word in *Pagan* Writers, and from them with some other of their Conceits, entertained by such Ages of the Church as are held in great veneration. The *Mysta* knew some Rules for Religious Worship, which he learned from Books locked up in Archives, not accessible to the people; The Fathers of the Christian Church at first so imitated them, as to hide from the Catechumens the Rites of Sacraments, which from thence took the name of the Mysteries; and herein they were so cautious of concealing the form of administering the Eucharist especially, that they durst not commit the words to writing, so much as in a Letter to a Bishop, lest they might by some accident fall into uncapable hands. And after-ages came closer up to their pattern, by telling the Laity, that implicit Faith in the Church must satisfie them in Mysteries of Faith.

So the word plainly importeth two contrary Aspects upon two different Persons ; hid to the one, and open to the other : But that it should at the same Time, and to the same Persons, be both hid and open, is more than a hidden Myſtery ; it is an open Contradiction, and it is no leſs ſo, that I muſt believe what is hidden from my underſtanding.

If the Goſpel profeſs itſelf to be a Revealer of Myſteries, then, to tell me, that it concealeth ſome Truths as Myſteries, yet requireth me to believe them ; this is no leſs a calumny upon the Goſpel, than an abuſe of the Word.

He that telleth the Laity, that they muſt be ſatisfied with implicit Faith in the Church, ſpeaketh the language of a Pagan Myſtagogue ; but a faithful Preacher of the Goſpel muſt juſtify himſelf to his People in the language of *St. Paul* to the Elders of *Ephesus*, *I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you.*

Some may judge of ſuch a Church as boaſteth of Myſteries, by what is written in *Rev. 17.* and take That for a ſummary Answer to our preſent Enquiry, concerning the *changes which later Ages have made in the Faith and Church of Chriſt* : From ſimple Nakedneſs, to Gold, Purple, Scarlet, and precious Stones ; from plain Truth preached and believed by the meaneſt, to Myſteries ; from the moſt affectionate love, to drunkenneſs with the blood of Saints ; from the chafte Spouſe of Chriſt, to a great Whore, and Mother of Harlots. But what Truth may lie in ſuch a cenſure, we may find more fully by our next Enquiry.

ENQUIRY III.

What Damages or Advantages have enſued upon the Changes and Additions which later Ages have made in the Goſpel ?

THIS Enquiry is double, and requires a Balance, that in one Scale we may lay the *Damages*, in the other the *Advantages*, and ſo weigh the one againſt the other.

Fiſt then, we will conſider the *Damages*, and Them in relation to Three ſubjects :

1. *To our Lord and his Goſpel.*
2. *To private Chriſtians in particular.*
3. *To the Chriſtian Church in general.*

I. *To our Lord's Honour*, theſe Changes bring as great Damages, and in as proper a ſence, as any contumelious Doctrines can : They repreſent him not as a good and wiſe Prince, whoſe Laws tend to the happineſs of his People ; but as a capricious and humorous one, that without any other motive than his unaccountable Will, impoſeth a ſtupid belief, of a multitude of impertinent and incredible Propoſitions, without, yea (ſome of them) againſt all Reaſon, without any other fruit but (what he moſt hateth) ſtrife, contrary to that ſimplicity wherein the Goſpel glorieth, and to the contempt which God himſelf ſheweth to acts of meer underſtanding.

In reference to the Animal Life, we find that he meaſureth to us Knowledge by our Needs. Though we can hardly know any thing to the bottom, yet we know ſufficient to answer the requires of our life. Thouſands of Years paſſed, before it was queſtioned, whether the Earth or the Sun move, and it is ſtill a queſtion. The

Discoveries of the Telescope and Microscope are new, yet do they both shew us admirable News, one in a multitude of unthought of Stars, the other in a World of Wonderful pretty Beauties : And the many Discoveries which Anatomy hath lately made in our Bodies, do not so much contribute to our knowledge as our wonder, nor at all instruct us in the Operation of our Bodies or Minds. The same Conduct is visible in reference to Spiritual Life : Our Lord hath plainly revealed, and required us to believe, what is sufficient for the Divine Life ; but in Questions no way serviceable thereto, Innocence, Ignorance, yea, and Error, will no more destroy our Souls, than an Error in Philosophy will our Bodies.

But that he should require exact and confident belief in every Question, which a ranging invention can startle ; that he should by his Apostle require us to *avoid foolish questions, as knowing that they gender strife*, yet to believe the truth in every one of them ; that to prevent our mistakes in such forbidden Questions, he should establish an Oracle, which at pleasure might coin them into Articles of Faith ; these are such Contradictions both among themselves, and to the Wisdom of God, that no Error can be more dishonourable to him, than so vile a conceit of his conduct.

If further we descend to particulars, take an Inventory of the thus imposed new Articles of Faith, their irreconcilable opposition with the plainest Sense and Reason, their impudent pimping for the Priests Interests, their extravagant impertinence to any other end, &c. and then compare such a Gospel, with that gracious one which our Lord and his Apostles preached ;

we shall find greater cause of wonder, that the Professors of Christ's Religion should so impudently corrupt it, than that God should so change his countenance toward it, as in our Introduction we saw reason both to complain and justify.

The Faith which at first prevailed over the World, was no less suitable to the *Nature*, than to the *Needs* of Mankind. That every Man needed a *Mediator* between a holy God and himself, every man's own guilty conscience convinced him ; that *the Son of God came into the world*, to perform that necessary Office, promising pardon and everlasting life to those that would believe in him as such ; was a Doctrine so easy to the understanding, so welcome to the desires, and so obligingly offered, that as soon as it courted the World, it won upon it.

But had the Apostles brought the modern Gospel either to the learned *Greeks* or rude *Barbarians*, told them, that God had sent his Son into the World to save them that would believe, not only in Himself, but in his Vicar too ; should they then have opened their Packs of impertinent Mysteries, declared that some men thereto first qualified by, a few words, should afterward by other five words turn a bit of Bread into the Body of God, which himself and others must first worship, and then eat, &c. If such stuff as this had been preached, and such credulity as cannot be justified from folly, made the condition whereon man must hope to be justified from all their sins ; what considering Man would not rather stick to the Religion of his Fathers, whatever it were, than change it for one so much worse ?

Yes ! such a Religion must appear much worse than any other ; for the

Apologists, who upon this Topick pleaded for the Christian Religion against the Pagan, though they sufficiently exposed the gross Follies of the later, yet could not charge it with so many and gross ones, as those which swarm in that one Doctrine of Transubstantiation; nor hath *Mahomet*, among all his Whimsies, any thing comparable to it.

What wonder now that the Gospel cannot gain any Country upon Heathenism, and hath lost so many to Mahometism? yea, what wonder if in its own bowels it suffer so much by Atheism? What wonder that no Religion is so much pestered by it as the Christian, no Country so much as that, where this Oracle hath its seat?

When a bold person heareth his Teacher avow, that it were as good be of no Religion at all, as of any other than That, of whose Corruptions he is convinced, (though to an indifferent understanding nothing be more incredible, yet) his Lust will soon persuade him to take the Doctor at his word, and reject all Religion for the sake of the corrupt one.

If therefore Heathenism, Mahometism, or Atheism, be enemies to the Gospel; the Changes which later Ages have made in it, must be imputed to their Authors, as so many Trespasses against it, and be condemned in suitable Damages.

II. As the changes made in the Faith are dishonourable to our Lord and his Gospel, so are they pernicious to the Church of Christ, both in its particular Members, and its Publick Body as the Spouse of Christ.

1. They are pernicious to private Christians, by robbing them of much of that happiness which the Gospel is designed to bring them, which we have

found to be, 1. *Participation of the Divine Nature*; 2. *Fulness of Joy*.

1. They rob good men of much of that Godliness, which otherwise they should have attained. The Apostle beseecheth us *as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*. That War is made by Diversion: *Wine and Women take away the heart*; they divert the Soul from labouring for the Divine Life, to wallowing in the brutish; and were it possible to compute how much mischief every Lust doth this way, we should certainly find that no One, nor (perhaps) All together, would be found so pernicious as this One Lust of Disputing and Imposing: For by this One, all the rest are so far strengthened, as our Forces are diverted from warring against them.

The more we dispute against our Brethren, the less we dispute against our Lusts: that ardor of Zeal, which else would have flamed up in Divine Love, mouldereth away in the black smoaky heats of bitter Zeal.

Very happy sure must the great Disputers be, whose Lusts are so mortified, that can spare so much of their Time and Affections, to be plaid away at this push-pin: or very unhappy, if they waste so much of them both, while their Lusts remain unconfused: yea, they are unhappy if, having baffled their Lusts, they lose so much of Joy, and of increase in Godliness, as with the same labor, and infinitely greater benefit, they might have purchased.

The greatest part of mankind (we see) hath not souls large enough to entertain both sorts of Zeal: but look how much there is of zeal for what they think Faith, against what they call Heresie, so much is lost from

Love of God and our Neighbour, and from Reformation of the most mortal Errors of our Lives.

2. They rob good men of that *fulness of joy* which is the design of the Gospel. *The wicked* (saith the Prophet) *are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* If it be miserable to be tossed with storms, then are Disputes in matters of Faith miserably pernicious; not only by hindering mens minds from warring against the lusts which raise those storms, but by raising others no less tempestuous, between Faith imposing things incredible, and Reason resisting such Impositions.

Where is that considering person who escapeth those storms? There are that tell us stories of the Roman Priests themselves, that they frequently confess, that all their struglings cannot subdue their Reason to a belief of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that their Confessors also in their turns confess the same to their Confessors; but cannot either give or receive such Penance as can remove the incurable evil. What conflicts must such contrary winds necessarily raise in a soul infinitely desirous and equally unable to believe!

Moralists promise us Peace and Joy if we subdue our Lusts. Apostles upon better warrant make us the same Promises. Alas! now we find another, and that an invincible Enemy, made of that very Friend, by whose help we were to have obtained that Victory. By help of good Reason, assisted by God's Grace, we may subdue our Lusts; but how shall we subdue our Reason, which as it is our own Nature, without which we cannot be men, so it is the Image of God, and like its Original, Immortal and Invin-

cible? Must we deface God's Image that we may partake his Nature? Fight against him *in effigie*, that we may obey him in his Vicar? This were to perform contradictions that we may believe them, and we shall find the one no less above our strength than the other; but after all endeavours, either to satisfy or stupify our minds, we shall never be able to quiet them.

A hard warfare indeed! First by our Reason we must fight against our Lusts; and then by Faith we must fight our Reason; which yet we must find Invincible, and so the War desperate.

Is it thus, *the peace of God passeth all understanding*? Must we out-run *all understanding*, that we may overtake Peace? Is it thus, that *believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious*? Or is this the *good fight of Faith*, which we are by the Apostle encouraged to fight, and by experience find unprosperous?

Another, and no less unhappy War, do these additional Doctrines raise toward our Brethren, whom they tempt us to hate and persecute, under pretence of answering St. Jude's alarm, *to contend earnestly for the Faith.* Something of this we have seen under the consideration that *Faith is exalted above Charity*, and something more we shall see in observing the mischiefs which accrue to the Church of Christ in its *publick capacity*, to which therefore we hasten without stop at the mutual Enmities between private Christians, however visible and lamentable.

III. The next subject of damage is the *Church of Christ in its general capacity*: and this indeed is concerned in all the rest. For the Community, which is the Catholick Church, is the Spouse

Spouſe of Chriſt, whoſe happineſs is the adequate end of the Goſpel, whoſe every Promiſe and Precept is employ'd as a Means to ſerve it, and therefore whatever croſſeth this good deſign, if it come from our Lord, muſt diſhonour his Conduct.

Again, the Catholick Church is a Body compact of ſingle Members, whoſe ſeveral happineſs or pain affecteth the whole.

Whether our Lord hath been faithful or defective in his care for the happineſs of every particular, and the whole Community, how ſhall we examine? If by his own and his Apoſtles Precepts, no Religion in the world could ever vie with the Goſpel, either in Precepts or Arguments for the deareſt love, the greateſt happineſs of the Church, as well Triumphant as Militant: If by the practice of its Profeſſors, none ever ſtirred up ſuch mutual Quarrels among private perſons, ſuch cruel Perſecutions by Princes, ſuch bloody Wars between Nations.

Our Lord indeed appointed it for an Incendiary, but its fires were to be thoſe of the moſt ardent Love: it is from the Corruptions of later Ages, that thoſe lambent flames are by bitter zeal changed to devouring fires. Our Lord's great Apoſtle ſaith, that *in Chriſt Jeſus nothing availeth but faith working in love*; but his pretended Vicar ſaith, Nothing availeth but Faith working by Zeal, and the beſt Zeal is the moſt bitter.

The Armies which blind zeal raiſed for the recovery of the Holy Land from Infidels, have been diverted by this bitter zeal, for the corrupters of the Chriſtian Faith, againſt the oppoſers of thoſe Corruptions; and pardon of ſin promiſed to ſuch as ſhould loſe their lives in ſo holy a cauſe; wherein how many have been deſtroyed, who can

compute? Some have done their endeavours, who give us this account.

Of *Albanyes* and *Walloes* ſlain nine hundred thouſand: From thence to theſeſtimation none hath ſet down the account of them that have been cut off, partly by ſiege, partly by ſword, partly by other torments. From the beginning of the *Jems* to the Year 1580. in ſiege more than thirty years, *Baldwinus* noteth almoſt nine hundred thouſand put to death by the alone hand of the Executioner. The *Duoſtreva* gloried in the ſlaughter of ſix and thirty thouſand in *Belgium*, only in a few years. *Virgerius* witneſſeth, that the Inquiſition, in ſcarce thirty years, conſumed a hundred and fifty thouſand by ſeveral kinds of torments. We cannot ſtop our ears or eyes ſo hard, as to avoid the lamentable ſight and complaints of our next Neighbours ſuffering (under him that calleth himſelf *the moſt Chriſtian King*, and glorieth in the atchievement) more than any yea than all the primitive Chriſtians ſuffered under thoſe whom our Fathers call'd cruel Perſecutors, but this compariſon will repreſent as mild Princes.

Aſtoniſhment and grief here ſtop us; we therefore turn to examin what weight the other Scale carrieth.

II. *What advantages accrue by the changes which later Ages have made in the Faith of the Goſpel.*

Here we muſt crave the grant of two Suppoſitions.

I. *That the Clergy in oppoſition to the People, and the Church of Rome in oppoſition to all other Churches, is Chriſt's Spouſe, and conſequently what is gained to that Spouſe is gained to Chriſt himſelf.*

2. *That the temporal advantages which accrue to that Spouſe may be equivalent to the ſouls which may be loſt to purchaſe them.*

Unless theſe two ſuppoſitions be granted, we have not a word

to say; but if they be, that Church will shew such gains, as if they fall short of the full value, yet shall be sure to avoid the complaint of *David*, that they sell *God's people for nought, and take no money for them*. It is confessed, *money* in kind, is not so properly the gain made by this part of the Gospel, yet may it be reduced hither: for were not mens understandings muffled by implicit Faith, they could never be so grossly cheated as they are in the Doctrines of Repentance. But that *house of merchandise* we may take another time to visit; at present we are in pursuit of a nobler game, *Honour and Power*; and in these we shall divide the gains as we did the damages. For as in those we considered what accrued to God, and what to man; so in these we shall *what is gotten to the Pope as Christ's Vicar, and what to inferior Priests as his Officers*.

I. The *Pope*, under the Character of *Christ's Vicar*, by changes and additions made in the Faith of the Gospel, hath gotten that boundless Honour and Power, to which otherwise he hath no pretence.

It is not a word or two of our Lord, strained beyond the mind of the speaker; it is not his *Pasce oves*, or *Tues Petrus*, that can move a serious man, to any thing but astonishment at such boldness, as dares with intolerable impudence burlesque our Lord's words; but is the pretended necessity of an *infallible Chain*, which hath advanced that Bishop, not only above all other *Bishops*, but above all *Princes* in the world.

For what can set a strand to that Power which can impose upon mens belief without bounds? What can make such an exorbitant Power credible, if the *Ned* appear not great as the *Ab-surdity*? And what colour of such *Ned*, if the bounds of Faith be not enlarged, beyond those narrow ones

which our Lord set? But when matters of belief are so multiplied, that it is impossible for a man of ordinary business in the world, not only to understand them; but even to number them; when in most of them, sometimes two, sometimes more parties, contend with equal confidence; and can be brought to no other agreement but in this, that they cannot be too zealous for the Truth; what is this, but a state of war between the Disputants, and of doubts in the by-standers? and how can Peace be obtained without a living Arbitrator?

Thus the disputacy of Doctors made an infallible Chair appear necessary, and those who sit in that Chair, have so far made it infallible, as to determine what is most advantageous to themselves; for they have thereby gained Honour and Power, boundless as their Matters of Faith, and incredible as their Mysteries.

Their (a) Canon-law declareth and pretendeth to prove, by *Gen. I.* that the *Pope is as much greater than the Emperor as the Sun is than the Moon*; and (b) so much better than other Kings, as *Gold is better than Lead*. This is modest, if their Power in imposing Faith, be more arbitrary than that of Emperors and Kings in imposing Taxes.

Their Supremacy over other Bishops is derived from the same Fountain. The same unhappy controversy which made others disputacions, made the Bishop of Rome Supreme. The gain that he made of the entertainment, which he so often gave to *Arbanasius* and his Party, was this: He thence took advantage to claim a negative in Councils, and after ward the sole power of determining Controversies out of Council. And how much he must be above the rest of mankind, who is so much above all other Bishops, we may (I was

(a) *Greg. de major. & obed. c. solita.* (b) *Distin. 96. c. duo sunt.*

about to say compute) admire by the next part of our enquiry, the gain of the Priests.

II. The Priests have exalted themselves above the People, as much as the Pope above all Princes and Bishops. That they might keep the Laity at greater distance, they have doubly abused them; first by multiplying and entangling the Doctrines of Faith, and then by with-holding the Light that should clear them: At the same time *surfitting* them with a glut of Doctrines, and *starving* them with a famine of the Bread of Life. So the Gospel is to them both kinds of Wilderness; bare as the Sands of *Africk* (without Path or Land-mark) for want of Scripture; yet thick-wooded as the Hills of *Zuluan* (whose Bushes none can creep through) by multitudes of Doctrines: So that those whom Education hath enabled to understand the Language wherein the Scripture was written, find Scholastick Divinity so overgrown with briars, that they think it better, and are willing to believe those who perswade them so, to lie in ease and ignorance, taking Images for their Books, and Priests for their Oracles, than tire themselves with such entangling studies.

Yea, which is yet more intolerable, they keep the People ignorant, not only of God's Word to them, but of their own to God, locking up their own publick Prayers in the same unknown Tongue with the Scriptures. *Ignorance* (say they) *is the Mother of Devotion*: It is so; but of devotion toward the Priest, not toward God; for where there is no light in the understanding, what heat can there be in the affections? What devotion without love, and what love without some knowledge of the object? St. *John* telleth us, *We love God, because he loved*

us first, but then he suppoeth we know it. St. *James* requireth, that *we pray in faith*, but he suppoeth we know what we ask. But if I depend upon the Priest, both for God's word to me and mine to God, what is he less than God's Oracle, and how much more than my Mediator? And upon either office, the claim that he maketh to my greatest reverence will be as just as it is intolerent, which that it is sufficiently, appears by these their demands:

Stanislaus Onicharius saith, That a *common Priest* is as much better than a *King*, as a *Man* is better than a *Beast*; yea further, That as far as God Almighty doth excel a *Priest*, so much doth a *Priest* excel a *King* (a). If you desire to know what particular *Beast*, *Gaspar Schioppius* will inform you: *Lay-men* (saith he) are *Asses*, *Mules*, or *Horses*; the *Romanist* a *tame Ass*, the *Heretick* a *wild one* (b). *Catholick Kings* are the *Leading-asses* with *Bells*, *Reges Catholici sunt aſini cum tintinnabulo*.

Thank them heartily! We *Hereticks* are the wiser, that keep ourselves (*wild*, as they call it) free, as Nature made us; not suffer ourselves to be saddled, laden with bardens, whereof we know nothing but the heaviness, driven we know not whither, nor why, and lashed by insolent Masters. Such usage is enough to make those turn wild, whom Education hath tamed.

The Proverb telleth us, That *did the Horse know his own strength*, he would not endure such usage as now he doth: And what hindereth us from knowing the strength of our own mind? We have the same Scripture, we have the same Faculties whereby to understand it, and we have more certainty of our own sincerity than we can have of our Masters: what hindereth us from taking the blessed King's advice, not to take our Religion from other

mens Traditions, but our own Judgments?

If we can have the boldness to believe this, which even our Riders cannot deny, that nothing can be matter of saying Faith, but what the Author of our Faith made so; and that the Scripture hath faithfully informed us of what he said in that great point; we may soon know ourselves to be no less infallible than the Pope pretendeth to be: And if we can as easily shake off the loads which our Lusts impose, as those which the Schoolmen do; we may then enjoy that true liberty, whereof our Redeemer saith, *If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed.*

The CONCLUSION.

THE end of all is to determine between Faith and Love, as our Lord did between God and Caesar, Give unto Faith the things that are Faith's, and unto Love the things that are Love's; to Faith its due Bounds, and to Love its due boundlessness; to Faith the praise of a good Servant, and to Love the honour of a good Lord; to Faith the power of advancing Love, but not of restraining it. For thus doth the Apostle extend it, Do good to all, especially to those that are of the household of Faith: Which Household also the same Apostle extendeth to All which consist the Lord Jesus, and believe that God hath raised him from the dead. And if any (not satisfied with their place in the House) will needs build themselves Huts of Wood, Hay, or Stubble, it will destroy their Works with such Fires as shall spare their Persons.

This is the singular Honour of the Reformers of our Church, this maketh it the best constituted Church in the World, that in her departure from the Corruptions of Rome, she departed not from Charity.

We are now considering none of her Con-

stitutions, but those which concern Faith, which both in the Office for Baptism, and that for Visitation of the sick, she plainly declareth not to extend beyond the simplest of all the Creeds: whence it must necessarily follow, that if any where else she have said or instituted any thing, that may appear repugnant to those declarations, it must be thereby interpreted, and imputed to her imitation of the great Apostle's Conduct, becoming a Papist to the Papists, that by all means she might gain some of the Papists. For this good reason, in her Liturgy she kept their best Collects, whatever was justifiable in their Litany, and all their Creeds; in her Rubricks, many of their Feasts, most of their Fasts, and some of their Ceremonies: And the success justified this conduct, till a Bull from Rome blasted the Fruit which such fair Blossoms promised.

But since that time, as she hath gotten none from Rome, so hath she on the other side lost many of her own, whose narrower Souls could not swallow such things, as were in no other relation valuable, but what they carried to so good an end; and now more than a hundred years experience calleth upon the same Charity, to tack about and steer a contrary course. It is a general Rule and practised by all good Physicians, to observe whether their Prescriptions do more good or hurt; nor would he be faithful either to his Patient or Profession, that should obstinately stick to his first Orders, in contradiction to experience. It hath pleased our Gracious King to Invite and Authorize the Prelates and Representatives of our Church, to practise the same Charity toward our distempered Church and State; and it will be a great disappointment both to His Majesty and his good People, if so glorious an Opportunity prove fruitless: nor will those who glory in the Character of Church-of-England-men make good their claim to it, if they really dishonour her by renouncing her spirit of Charity, supposing to honour her by their stiffness to those Constitutions, whose very Authors (were they now living, and true to their own Reason) must be willing to abolish them.

