TRACTS.

VI.

'RACTS.

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BY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY

FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

VOL. VI.

CONTAINING,

I. AN ADDRESS TO UNLEARNED CHRISTIANS.
II. A REPRESENTATION OF THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.
III. MR. LINDSEY'S CATECHIST.
IV. MR. ROGERS'S FIVE SERMONS.

LONDON:

PRINTED, MDCCXCIII.

A

SERIOUS ADDRESS

TO

CHRISTIANS, &c.

Printed by Stower & Hare, Duke-Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, London.

A

SERIOUS

ADDRESS TO CHRISTIANS

OF

TRINITARIAN

AND

CALVINISTIC SENTIMENTS.

BY AN UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN.

LONDON:

RE-PRINTED IN THE YEAR

1800.

A

SERIOUS ADDRESS, &c.

MY FELLOW CHRISTIANS,

I TAKE the liberty of addressing this letter to those of you, in particular, who are not acquainted with the learned languages or with ecclesiastical history. And I hope that you will excuse the freedom of a few plain hints on a very important subject. I presume, that you all have been trained up, to a reverence for the scriptures, and to a sincere value for the truth taught in them. In cherishing this reverence for scripture, and this love for scripture-truth, you certainly do well. Religious truth is that which every one, who has a capacity for enquiry, should ardently pursue: and the discoveries made in scripture on subjects of the greatest consequence are of inestimable worth. I cannot then wonder, that when you are told, by

those in whom you are accustomed to place a confidence, that this or that particular system of divinity degrades God, vilifies the Saviour, undermines christianity, or strips it of its fundamental doctrines, and pours contempt on scripture, you are ready to listen to these insinuations, to think with horror of the system, and to regard with aversion all who maintain it. But, my friends, it is possible that your teachers may have given you wrong information, and may have endeavoured to prejudice you against the system particularly referred to, without being themselves acquainted with its nature and tendency. Be not afraid to enquire and to judge for yourselves. It is your duty to enquire; and, in regard to many arguments produced in the debate, you are sufficiently qualified for judging. Be not afraid of truth, or of its consequences, wherever it may appear to be found. It never did, and never can do, any one any harm. Cherish an honest love of truth, an indifference to every thing but truth. And be pleased to remember, that those, who have departed the farthest from the religious system which you have embraced, can have no possible motive to it but the same love of truth; which they pursue with as much solicitude as any others of their fellow-christians, and which they think they have found in a set of opinions very different from theirs. It cannot, it cannot, be the real intention of any professor of christianity, to

misrepresent

misrepresent its doctrines, or to vilify its illustrious Author. Be intreated then to attend with calmness and patience to a few observations, which may serve to throw a little light upon the subject, and to do justice to the character and conduct of some of your fellow-professors upon whom the most injurious reflections have been cast.

§ 1. You have heard, no doubt, of different systems of religious truth, which have been adopted by different persons, and which have been called Trinitarian or Antitrinitarian, Calvinistic or Arminian, &c. But let me ask you, are these several systems to be considered as any other than the opinions of particular persons concerning the doctrines of christianity? The Athanasian doctrine was certainly the opinion of Athanasius; the Arian, that of Arius; the Socinian, that of Socinus; the Calvinistic, that of Calvin; the Arminian, that of Arminius. They were the opinions which these particular persons entertained concerning the truths of the gospel. They have been received by others, either according to the apprehended strength of the arguments by which their proposers supported them, or according as they were favoured by particular bishops or emperors. But still, by whomsoever proposed or received, or howsoever supported, they were originally no more than the particular opinions of him who proposed them, and still are no more than the particular opinions of those who embrace them.

§ 2. Is it not, therefore, great arrogance in any one set of fallible men, to assert with positiveness that their own particular opinions are the very fundamentals of christianity, and to charge those who differ from them with denying the fundamentals of the christian faith? Will any one pretend to say, that either Athanasius, Arius, or Socinus, either Calvin or Arminius, or any one of those who have since thought like any of them, was an infallible judge of controversy, an unerring interpreter of scripture? Must it not then be great arrogance and presumption, and that in every one alike, to assert with confidence, that his system of divinity is the very essence of christianity, and that those who do not agree with him are endeavouring to subvert the whole gospel by rejecting what is essential to it? How can such bold assertions as these, and especially how can such rash censures of others, be consistent with acknowledging that no one is infallible? It is allowed that in proportion as any person, after full and fair enquiry, thinks he has attained the truth, he is justified in saying that he believes himself to be possessed of it. But ought not all persons to reflect, that they are still liable to error, that perhaps their confidence may arise from want of farther information, and that others have the same right of judging for themselves which they have? If they do not, why do they disown a claim to infallibility? On this principle, though at one time they disown it, at another they really maintain

tain it, and act as if they could prove a title to it. Is not this conduct altogether inconsistent with that right of private judgment, which, as all agree, belongs to every one? And must it not be wholly destructive of all christian candour and brotherly kindness? If every one will maintain that his own particular tenets are essential to christianity, and that all who differ from him reject the fundamentals of christianity; how can that spirit of harmony and friendship exist among the professors of it, upon which our blessed Master hath laid so great a stress?

§ 3. But it is worth while to enquire particularly what is declared in the New Testament itself to be fundamental to christianity. I therefore refer you, my friends, to the history of Jesus Christ as given by the four evangelists, and to that of the apostles as recorded by Luke, where you have an account, of the travels of Jesus and his apostles, of what they preached, and of the terms upon which they admitted their converts into the number of professed christians. These you are able to understand as well as the most learned of your teachers. Read them for yourselves. And judge for yourselves, whether that which the gospel-histories were written to promote the belief of ---that which the miracles of Jesus were intended to prove---that which the labours, the preaching, the miracles of his apostles, were all designed to confirm and to propagate---that the acknowledgement of which

was deemed sufficient to entitle a person to christian baptism---was not simply this truth (when proposed to those who already acknowledge the being of one God) that Jesus was a messenger sent from God, or (in the language of the apostles, as soon as they were at liberty fully to declare their Master's character and office) "the Christ." I appeal to yourselves, on an impartial study of the New Testament history, whether this was not the great article which was recommended to the faith of mankind, and the belief of which was esteemed sufficient to entitle them to the name and privileges of christians. I appeal to yourselves, whether there is, in the accounts which the evangelists and apostles give of their Master, and of the great object of his mission, the slightest hint of the commonly received opinions of his proper deity and satisfaction as being *essential* to christianity. Read what he says of himself; and consider what it is, respecting himself, on which he lays the greatest stress. Read what the apostles, Peter and Paul, are recorded, in the history of their acts, to have said of him; and see what is the character in which they exhibit him. See, whether they represent him as sustaining any higher character than that of a messenger from God, and whether they do not seem to have considered the belief and acknowledgement of this as the only thing fundamental to christianity (that is, when they were addressing those who worshipped

shipped the One only true God). Now, if this truth alone was considered by the first preachers of the gospel as fundamental to it, what right have others after them to invent new fundamentals, and to reproach those who do not submit to their usurped authority, as stripping christianity of what is essential to it?

§ 4. Since therefore nothing is declared, in the gospel itself, to be fundamental to christianity, beside this great truth, that Jesus is the Christ, or a messenger from God, consider farther, whether there is any thing wanting in that system on which such opprobrious names have been lavished, which can on its own account be supposed to be fundamental to it. The system referred to, is generally called the Unitarian or Socinian scheme. It is called Unitarian, because they who embrace it look on themselves as the only class of christians who really and properly maintain the unity of God. This is the only name by which they wish to distinguish their sentiments, because it is taken, not from persons, but from opinions. Their peculiar principles are indeed often called Socinian, from Socinus, who was one of the first who in later times revived the original doctrine of the apostle Peter (Acts ii. 22,) that Jesus of Nazareth was a man *approved of* God by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did by him. But the scheme now called Socinian, differs very materially from that of Socinus. And therefore the de-

fenders of it do not chuse to take a name from the man himself: partly, because they think that this would intimate an approbation of all his peculiar tenets, which they do not really give to them; and partly, because they think that it would be like an acknowledgement of submission to his authority in matters of faith, which they entirely disavow. They prefer the name of Unitarians, because they imagine themselves to be the most consistent maintainers of the unity of God; a doctrine which, they think, has been undermined and subverted by the introduction of the Trinitarian scheme. I cannot express their sentiments more plainly than in the language of the apostle Paul (1 Tim. ii. 5,) that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men," (that is, the last and most distinguished revealer of the divine will) "the man Christ Jesus." Give me leave then to ask, is there any thing in this scheme which has the least tendency to overthrow the foundation of christian faith, obedience, or comfort? Consider it attentively; and judge for yourselves, whether the proper ground of our faith in Christ, of our obedience to him, of our expectations from him, is not secure upon the Unitarian system, at least as much as upon any other. And, if so, then think whether it can reasonably be said that this system strips christianity of any thing that is fundamental to it.

§ 5. As to the ground of christian faith, or, our belief that Jesus Christ was a messenger sent from God.

God. Did not Jesus speak of himself repeatedly and plainly as one who was sent or commissioned by God? And yet is it possible that he should sustain this character, if, according to the Trinitarian scheme, he is either the very and eternal God, or a part of him, or another being equal to him? Must he not be a being distinct from God, and in the most proper sense a creature of God, if he is to be considered as a messenger from God? And must he not be a much more suitable messenger to men, on the supposition of his being himself one of the human race, than on any other? What then is the evidence by which his divine mission is proved? Is it not uniformly represented as arising from the miracles which God wrought by him, and especially from his resurrection from the dead? And does not the Unitarian system leave the christian in full possession of all this? Yea, is not the resurrection of Jesus considered as the resurrection of a man, a more satisfactory proof that he was sent from God to preach the resurrection of mankind, than we could possibly have on any other supposition? Allowing that Jesus was naturally a man, we see a knowledge and a power displayed in him which was vastly superior to that of mere man. And therefore certainly we have the greater warrant to conclude, that God was with him, and consequently that he was sent from God. Observe then, my christian friends, the ground of your faith in Christ, as sustaining that character under which he is always

held

held forth in the gospel, is secure, yea, peculiarly firm, on the Unitarian Scheme. Admit this scheme, and you may easily conceive how he may be a messenger from God. And you see that distinction preserved, which the New Testament always maintains, between the Sender and the sent. On the Trinitarian Scheme, this distinction is lost; and, either the Sender and the sent are one and the same being, or the sent is totally independent of, and no way subject to Him that sent him.

§ 6. As to the ground of Christian Obedience. Ask yourselves what this is. Must you not acknowledge upon a little reflection, that it is the authority of God; exercised, not indeed for the purpose of shewing his own sovereignty, but to lead you in the best way to your own truest happiness? Now is not a precept delivered even by a Man, if that man is *approved* as a messenger from God by miracles and wonders and signs which God works by him, to be considered as coming from God, as much as if it were given immediately by a voice from heaven? You cannot but acknowledge that the laws given to the Israelites by the mouth of Moses, respecting the government of their state, or the observance of ceremonies, sacrifices and feasts, were as much binding upon them as the ten commandments, which were delivered with an audible voice from heaven. And why, but because Moses was proved to be a messenger from God by the wonderful miracles which

God

God wrought by him? And yet Moses was but a man; and not so much distinguished in point of knowledge or power, as the Unitarians suppose Jesus Christ to have been. If then the ground, upon which the obedience of the Israelites was demanded, remained unshaken, notwithstanding that the messenger of God to them was but a man, why should it be thought that the obligation, which christians are under to obey the precepts of the gospel, is undermined, if it be allowed that he who brought them was but a man? Do but consider the matter coolly and without prejudice; and I think you must allow that, whatever be the original rank and dignity of the messenger, the regard which you ought to pay to his message, and the obligation you are under to obey his commands, depend entirely on the proof he gives that he is sent from God; so that, if he brings sufficient evidence of this, you are equally bound to hear and reverence him, whether he be the highest of angels, or a mere man.

§ 7. As to the ground of christian comfort. Peculiar stress has been laid on this circumstance. And, by the manner in which many have expressed themselves upon it, you have been led to believe, that the state of mankind is quite desperate, and that they have no hope for time or eternity, unless Jesus Christ hath made full satisfaction to divine justice for their sins, in order to which they conceive that he must be some way or other an infinite Being. But, my christian friends,

friends, be not deceived by rash and confident assertions. Read the scriptures for yourselves; and think for yourselves, what is likely to be their genuine meaning, and what will make their doctrine consistent with itself, on this head. You are taught to build all your hope of the pardon of sin and of future happiness on a satisfaction made to divine justice for sins. Now, if Jesus Christ be (as it is the present fashion to call him) the only true God; the satisfaction he has given, must be paid to himself. And is this sufficient to answer the end proposed, to acquit the sinner of the demands of rigorous justice? or can it afford any solid ground of comfortable reliance? If Jesus be another God independent of, or equal to the Father, must it not follow that he is no subject of him who is the Lawgiver and Judge of men, and consequently that *his* good conduct cannot answer the demands of our moral Governor upon *us?* Observe too, that this satisfaction is said to be made by his sufferings and death. But, can God suffer? can God die? On the other hand, allow that Jesus Christ is one of the creatures of God, and it will indeed follow that he is a subject of the divine government, as much so as the meanest of them, let him be ever so exalted a being; but, let it be remembered, it will likewise follow, that he must obey the divine law for himself, and that no obedience which he has paid to it can satisfy the demands it makes upon us. The law of God requires obedience from

every

every one who is subject to it, and knows nothing of one creature obeying for another. Unless every one of them pays obedience to it, as far as it is made known to him, its demands are not satisfied. You have heard indeed of one person obeying commands, or suffering punishments instead of another. But, if you will use your own reason, you must certainly be convinced that this is a thing in its own nature absolutely impossible. One person may receive advantage from the obedience of another, or may suffer disadvantage from his disobedience. But it is impossible that obedience or punishment should be transferred, or that what is paid or endured by one person should answer the demands of law upon another. You would readily acknowledge that this is impossible under human governments; and a very little reflection might convince you that it is equally impossible under the divine. If these things are so then, where is the boasted satisfaction upon which you are taught to build all your hope? It is reduced to what is, in the very nature of things, impossible. If then the thing itself is an impossibility, why should general expressions of scripture have a particular sense forced upon them, or figurative texts be strained to a literal meaning, to make them teach it? Does scripture itself assert it in plain and positive terms, or lead you to derive all your comfort from it? And indeed, supposing that the doctrine is true, and that the satisfaction taken for granted has really been offered

to

to divine justice; what is your warrant for believing that it has been accepted? Must not this be, the promise and covenant of God, (I mean of Him, to whose authority *we* are subject, and on whose pleasure *our* happiness must depend) to accept it? After all, then, must not the ground of your hope and comfort ultimately be, the promise of God, whether respecting the pardon of sin, or the bestowment of future happiness? And, supposing the Unitarian system to be true, that Jesus was a man sent from God, who hath made the brightest discoveries of the love and mercy of God, and hath brought the most encouraging promises in the name of God; are you not left in full possession of this ground of comfort still? Are declarations of the original love and goodness of God less worthy of your regard, or are the promises of God of less value, because brought by one of the human race; if he is sufficiently proved to be a messenger from God? When you are led to consider God as a Father, who sent to save the world, because He loved the world; cannot you trust him? When you are assured, in the name of God, that He will forgive the trespasses of those who truly repent of and forsake their sins; cannot you believe the assurances? Why will you overlook the solemn promises of one who cannot lie, who is disposed of His free love and mercy to pardon penitent sinners, and chuse rather to rely on a supposed satisfaction made to His justice, which there is the

greatest

greatest reason to think is in its own nature an absolute impossibility? Or why should you think the Unitarian System an enemy to your comfort, when it leaves you in full possession of that which is on all hands allowed to be ultimately the foundation of it? But besides, you are to consider that the system in question holds up to your regards another most important promise, as the great promise of the New Testament, that which above all has made the revelation of the gospel a blessing, and of which you have peculiar evidence on this system; and that is, a resurrection from the dead, and a future state of everlasting happiness for the righteous. This, like the promise of the pardon of sin, must have its foundation in the free love and goodness of God. Now, if He really intends that men shall in due time be raised from death, in order to their receiving according to their works, and that the righteous shall then be made everlastingly happy; how could He give a more full assurance of this His intention, than by raising from the dead a man distinguished for piety, benevolence and righteousness, and rewarding him with an endless life? If the Unitarian Scheme be true then, He hath actually done this. Christ * is raised from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. While, as by man † came death, by man cometh also the resurrection of the dead; in as much as it is appointed that at his voice

* 1 Cor. xv. 20 † ver. 21.

voice * *all* that are in the grave shall hereafter come forth; when God will judge the world in righteousness by that man † whom he hath ordained, who will then declare the divine approbation of all the pious and good, and take them to dwell for ever with himself. Is not this the plain, intelligible, and unperverted doctrine of the New Testament? If it is, I appeal to yourselves, whether there is any thing in the Unitarian System which undermines the ground of your comfort; or rather, whether it is not even more secure upon this system than upon any other.

And now, my christian friends, judge for yourselves, whether this system deserves to be vilified as stripping christianity of every thing fundamental to it. If the ground of christian faith, obedience and comfort remains uninjured by it; yea, is rendered by it more firm than by any other system of divinity, where is the damage or loss that christianity sustains from it? Nothing, surely, but ignorance of the real system can have given birth to the unjust aspersions that have been cast upon it.

§ 8. But, in the last place, it will surely be allowed that the great end of the christian revelation is to engage men to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world. I ask then, once more, whether the Unitarian System does not afford some peculiar assistance in, or encouragement to, such a life? You know that both reason and revelation enjoin the worship of

* John v. 28. † Acts xvii. 31.

of God. Now, does not the Unitarian System remove the insuperable embarrassment with which the exercises of devotion are attended according to the Trinitarian Scheme; by which you are led to worship you know not what, sometimes one Person, and sometimes three? Again the New Testament inculcates a variety of duties as of the highest obligation, and of indispensible necessity. Is it not, upon the Unitarian System, a considerable encouragement to the practice of them, that you see them discharged in the most exemplary manner, as far as the difference of situations would permit, by a man, who nobly resisted temptations similar to what you experience, and was eminent for the practice of virtues which are recommended to you? Farther, as the Unitarian System rejects the notion of a full satisfaction paid to divine justice for the sins of men, does it not enforce the necessity of personal holiness in a a manner peculiarly strong? And, as it teaches that the pardon of sin, and eternal life and happiness, are the gift of God's original mercy and love, bestowed freely, and not bought at the full price; does it not lay a foundation, such as the scheme of satisfaction cannot afford, for the exercise of that gratitude and love to God, which are the most powerful, the most pleasing, and the most acceptable principles of obedience? And lastly, as upon this supposition, you see distinguished piety and goodness most gloriously rewarded in the person of a man; have you not here

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the strongest possible motive to be stedfast and unmoveable in it? I ask yourselves, are not these very great assistances in, and encouragements to, a life of christian obedience; and such as are really peculiar to the Unitarian Scheme?

Upon the whole then, with how little reason is it, that this system is held up to public abhorrence, as if it struck at the foundation of christianity, and was designed to defeat the great end of the gospel and destroy its influence in the world! I hope, my christian friends, you see, that it retains every thing essential to christianity, and that its defenders may be at least as good christians as its opponents. Be not then frightened by hard names, from considering it attentively, and enquiring what there is to be said for it. Read the scriptures for yourselves; and see whether taking in *the whole* of what they teach on any particular subject, there is not reason to believe, that upon the whole they are favourable to it. Consider the system itself; and see, whether, instead of degrading God, it does not represent him in a light peculiarly venerable and amiable; whether, instead of vilifying the Saviour, it does not ascribe to him the highest honour to which he is really entitled; whether, instead of undermining christianity, or stripping it of its fundamental doctrines, it does not hold forth gospel-truth in its native purity and glory; whether, instead of pouring contempt on scripture, it does not afford the most consistent and honour-

able

able view of its contents. Consider what is to be said in behalf of it; and see, whether there be not reason at least to behold the defenders of it with much more good-will than you are at present inclined to treat them with, yea, whether there be not some reason to think that the balance of argument is in their favour. You may believe me, my friends, there was a time, when christians of your class were as much astonished at and shocked by the proposal of the Trinitarian Scheme (as the patrons of that very scheme acknowledged) as you can possibly be at present by the mention of the opposite one. It was not with such as you, but with the Heathen Philosophers who had been converted to christianity, that the apostacy from the faith at first delivered to the saints began. And, 'till those additions to the gospel, which they first introduced, are entirely done away, its best friends do not expect that it will ever appear in its original glory, or exert its original influence on mankind. Accept the affectionate wish of a sincere friend to christianity and to you, that you may be led into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; and that his glorious gospel, rightly understood and dutifully obeyed, may become the power of God to your salvation.

AN UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN.

Printed by Stower & Hare, Duke-Street, Lincoln's-Inn-Fields, London.

A

REPRESENTATION

OF THE NATURE OF

TRUE RELIGION.

ADDRESSED TO A LADY.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1697.

TO WHICH IS ADDED A

SHORT EXPLANATION

Of the END and DESIGN of the

LORD'S SUPPER.

Taken from a Treatise on that Subject, printed at *London*, for *W. Johnston*, 1760.

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.
1 John v. 3.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. John xiv. 21.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILKS AND TAYLOR, CHANCERY-LANE.
1802.

To the READER.

WHEN the following small Tract first appeared, it was intitled, "A LADY'S RELIGION." *It was originally drawn up by a Divine of the* CHURCH *of* ENGLAND, *for the use, it has been supposed, of the Honourable Lady* HOWARD, *and has not only been reprinted more than once at home, but translated into several modern languages. The second edition of it came out in the year* 1704, *when another letter upon the same subject was added to it; and in the year* 1748, *a third edition of it was published by the Rev.* FERDINANDO WARNER, *who, besides a preface, in which some account is given of the design and merits of the performance, prefixed to it a large extract from the preface to the French translation, and annexed to it a letter of his own to a lady under a very painful domestic affliction.*

The first of the abovementioned letters, appearing to be the whole of what the author intended when he began to write upon this important subject, and having no necessary connection with any thing which has been since joined with it, is here published by itself, with a view to its being rendered more extensively useful. The edition from which it is copied, is that

of 1748, *which has been carefully adhered to, excepting in the title, which perhaps was not the most happily chosen, and an expression or two relating to devotion, of which some might have made an use which the author certainly never designed.*

It is only needful to say, further, that the republication of this small Tract, and what is added to it, proceeds from no other principle than a desire to assist those into whose hands it may come, to form just apprehensions of that RELIGION *which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father; to set before them, in an easy view, the wisdom of the doctrine of our Saviour, and to remove those groundless apprehensions concerning the nature of any of his institutions, by which persons are either totally kept from them, or led to attend on them with a terror for which no upright mind can ever have the least occasion, and which, if they were able to view the services of the gospel in a juster light, would be exchanged for satisfaction and joy.*

A

REPRESENTATION, &c.

MADAM,

SINCE God has been pleafed to incline your heart to an early and ferious inquiry after religion, fo that you are fincerely defirous to know the will of God, in order to do it, I heartily wifh you had laid your commands upon one more able to affift you than I am; who, being bred up in an age of fpeculation and controverfy, have addicted myfelf to the ftudy of divinity, more perhaps than to the practice of religion; and have been (I pray God forgive me!) more defirous to furnifh my head with notions, than my heart with good inclinations. I thought myfelf, by my profeffion, chiefly engaged in a ftudy, how to defend the church, by law eftablifhed, againft all diffenters, rather than to promote the common caufe of ferious piety; and whilft, by the ftrange unaccountable genius of this age, I have been led afide to mix the ftudy of politics with that of religion, I have been bufily affifting the office of a minifter of ftate, rather than doing the good work of a minifter of *Jefus Chrift*.

Now, although it has pleafed God to make me in fome meafure fenfible of thofe bye-paths, in which I have fometimes walked, to the hinderance of that duty unto which I ought intirely to have devoted myfelf; yet I am apt to fear left thofe prejudices and undue prepoffeffions of mind may ftill remain within me, by which I fhall be prevented from giving your Ladyfhip fuch an idea of religion, as is fhort, plain, and pure, free from fuperftitious appendages, and feparate from every bye intereft.

But, without doubt, fuch as this is the true fpirit of the chriftian religion; every line whereof directly tends to make us eafy within ourfelves, kind and comfortable to one another here, and happy with God hereafter.

That our holy religion is a wife inftitution, will be evident to any one who confiders that God is its author, whofe wifdom appears in all his works. Thus, the frame of vifible nature being agreeably fet together, and having each part of it fuited to ufeful and proper ends, demonftrates it to be the work of divine wifdom. In like manner, the whole plan of pure religion, having alfo its parts fuitable to each other, and every one of them agreeably fet to the fame good and great defign of the whole, does thereby prove itfelf to be the contrivance of an all-wife God.

And hereby the wifdom of the Chriftian Religion will

will particularly appear, becauſe every part of it tends to promote the univerſal good of mankind; for which reaſon, the divine founder thereof was named *Jeſus*, that is, *Saviour*; becauſe his only deſign was to ſave us from the prevailing power of ſin, and from thoſe miſeries which that evil power would involve us in.

Thus, *temperance* promotes our health; *juſtice* in our dealings prevents us from ſuſtaining the revenges of the injured, and gains us truſt among men, with all the benefits which ariſe from thence. *Charity*, by promoting the common good of others, draws back their love and affection to ourſelves; while *patience* preſerves quiet within our own breaſts, and *ſelf-denial*, by reſtraining our extravagant appetites, eſtabliſhes the juſt power of reaſon over us, thereby fitting us for all conditions of life. And thus the law of *Chriſt* anſwers to the character of wiſdom, by its agreeableneſs to the beſt deſign of man; and upon this account *Solomon* charactered the idea of religion under the name of wiſdom.

Beſides theſe moral duties, there are ſeveral threats of God's judgments, and promiſes of his favour, contained in Chriſt's inſtitution: the former were wiſely deſigned to reſtrain us from immoralities, which are our greateſt follies; and the latter to engage us in the practice of virtue, which is our greateſt wiſdom. The threatenings prepare the way for the promiſes, and qualify us to receive them; inaſmuch

much as they ſhake off our affections from ill objects, in order for the promiſes to fix them upon good ones. We muſt needs ceaſe to do evil, before we can learn to do well.

Now, although a due conſideration of the divine nature, will carry us on to the belief of a future ſtate, in which he who is in perfection the beſt of all beings will diſtinguiſh the good from the bad by ample rewards and juſt puniſhments; yet becauſe every one's capacity may not be ſufficient to make this wiſe reflection, therefore *Jeſus Chriſt* was pleaſed (as the goſpel phraſes it) *to bring life and immortality to light*; that is, to give the world full aſſurance of a future ſtate, in which the juſt God will diſtinguiſh men hereafter, in ſuch a manner as they ſhall diſtinguiſh themſelves here; and it is the wiſdom of every one to preſerve this belief in his heart, and bear it always about him, becauſe it is the moſt awful monitor againſt our committing folly, and yields the ſtrongeſt encouragement to virtue.

From what has been ſaid, your Ladyſhip ſees, firſt, what is meant by *ſaving a ſoul*, *viz.* to deliver it from vicious habits and fearful puniſhments, the fatal conſequents of ſuch habits; and, by eſtabliſhing virtue therein, to recommend it to the favour of God. And, ſecondly, that the goſpel of Chriſt was deſigned to this very end; and its tendency hereunto is its wiſdom. And, thirdly, from hence

you

you alſo perceive, in what reſpect faith in *Jeſus Chriſt* is ſaid to ſave us, *viz.* becauſe this faith is our receiving the chriſtian moral for the rule of our lives, and the threats and promiſes contained in the goſpel, for the outward motives of our practice, according to that rule.

And from theſe three conſiderations, ſummed up together, you may examine all the various pretences which differing churches and communions make to the purity of chriſtian faith, ſo as to form a right judgment of them; for that communion which manifeſts itſelf to have no other deſign than to aſſiſt its members in ſaving their ſouls from the power of ſin, by the moral and motives aforementioned, is certainly the pureſt faith. So that, if you form yourſelf upon this principle, you may paſs by all nice ſpeculations, or profound myſteries, which have no direct tendency to improve your morals, without any hazard of ſalvation.

Secondly, As the chriſtian inſtitution is wiſely practical, ſo it is plain: or, in other words, we may ſay, that as the wiſdom of the chriſtian religion appears, firſt, by its being *practical*, ſo it appears, ſecondly, by being *plain*. The obſcure anſwers which were given out from the old heathen oracles, are now known to have proceeded from the indirectneſs of a deſigning prieſthood; who, to maintain their pretence of foretelling what ſhall come to paſs, ſent back all thoſe who came to

inquire

inquire after future events, with doubtful and uncertain anſwers. And it has been the obſervation of wiſe men, that when any one affects to be dark and myſterious in his converſation, either he has ſome indirect deſign in ſo doing; or elſe, whilſt he makes an oſtentation of wiſdom, he does in reality but diſcover his folly.

Now, the wiſdom of God cannot be conceived to aim at any other deſign in communicating itſelf to us, than the information of our minds in the nature of good and evil, and this in order to direct our choice; and all inſtruction muſt of neceſſity be plain; ſince it is by things eaſy and familiar, ſuch as at firſt ſight we may apprehend, whereby we can be led on to the knowledge of matters more remote and difficult. But obſcure and unintelligible doctrines can have no effect upon us beſide unprofitable amuſement: and *whatſoever is by the wiſdom of God laid out of our reach, can be no part of our concern.*

Further; to what end did he give us intellectual faculties? Surely not to amuſe, but to improve us, by enabling us thoroughly to underſtand each part of our holy religion, which directly tends to that end, *viz.* our moral improvement; as you will ſoon perceive, if you reduce the chriſtian inſtitution to its general heads, which are theſe:

Firſt, A narration of matters of fact.

Secondly, A declaration of moral laws.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, A revelation of ſuch motives which are proper to enforce this law upon our minds. An

Fourthly, Serious exhortations to refreſh our memories with our duty; and earneſtly to recommend it to our practice.

Firſt, Your Ladyſhip ſees, that the matters of fact contained in the four Goſpels, and the Acts of the Apoſtles (*viz.* the travels and tranſactions of Chriſt and his diſciples), are ſo plainly related, that you underſtand the relation as eaſily as you read it. And, *Secondly*, All laws *muſt* be plain, becauſe they are directions. Now, obſcure directions are but deluſions; and *laws* which are dubious, and difficult to be underſtood, are *traps* and *ſnares*. And, *Thirdly*, It is as neceſſary that *motives* ſhould be very intelligible, becauſe their deſign is to work ſtrongly upon our wills, by convincing our underſtandings. Add to this, *Fourthly*, That myſtical and unintelligible *exhortations* are ridiculous; upon which account, St. *Paul* forbade religious exerciſes to be performed in an unknown tongue.

Now, as the four Goſpels, and Acts of the Apoſtles, contain matters of facts, laws, and motives, ſo the Epiſtles contain exhortations to ſerioufneſs and piety, ariſing from the laws, facts, and motives before mentioned: and I take theſe books to be ſufficiently comprehenſive of the inſtitutions and ordinances of Jeſus Chriſt; which ought indeed to be

eafily intelligible, becaufe they concern the poor, weak, and unlettered people, as much as the learned.

Nor can I fee that the doctrine of Chrift was, by him or his apoftles, delivered firft of all into the hands of the learned, to be by them conveyed into the minds of the ignorant; but, on the contrary, it is manifeft, that our Saviour directed both his difcourfes and actions, immediately to the common people, as to the fcribes; and in like manner did his difciples addrefs their preachings and writings.

From all this difcourfe, concerning the clearnefs of Chrift's inftitution, you may learn, that you may fpare yourfelf the needlefs trouble of reading abftrufe and myfterious points of divinity. Nor need you fuffer yourfelf to be amufed with the pretended deep fpeculations of profound men, when you have the plain directions of a wife and good God before you, in following whereof you fhall meet with great reward.

Thirdly, The chriftian inftitution is fhort. True and genuine religion has always been fummed up, and gathered together, into a narrow compafs, by thofe who beft underftood it. Thus *Micah*, (vi. 8.) fpeaking of God, faith, '*He hath fhewn thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juftice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* And our Saviour fums up the whole law, in our love to God, and our neighbour,

bour: and, in another place, includes the whole ſcope of the law and the prophets, in this one rule, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, even ſo do unto them*; hereby directing us to make a right uſe of that reaſon, which God eſtabliſhed as his oracle in our breaſts; to which we may at all times reſort, and from whence we may be reſolved, in ſuch caſes as concern our duty to one another.

For as by conſulting your own reaſon, you know wherein you are juſtly dealt with, and wherein you receive wrong; when you are kindly uſed, and when otherwiſe; ſo, from the ſame principle of reaſon, you cannot but know, when you deal juſtly or wrongfully, and when you do kind, or ill, offices to another: This one ſhort comprehenſive rule, taking for its foundation the equality of mankind, in reſpect of their common nature, renders religion itſelf a matter *ſenſible* unto us.

For I can feel the wound of a ſharp ſlanderous tongue, as ſenſibly as that of a ſword; I can feel the wrongs done to myſelf and family; and am as much ſenſible of the benefits which I enjoy, from the juſt and kind dealings of thoſe with whom I am concerned; and hereby I am, in the ſhorteſt and plaineſt way, admoniſhed of my behaviour to others: And if this one ſhort rule were reduced to practice, the ſtate of Paradiſe would be reſtored, and we ſhould enjoy a heaven upon earth.

For hereby, *First*, all perſecutions for conſcience ſake, which have occaſioned ſuch violent diſorders, and vaſt effuſion of blood, would be at an end; becauſe every one who has any conſcience, would moſt willingly preſerve it free from the impoſitions of men in the worſhip of God. To compel men, by fire and faggot, to partake even of a delicious entertainment, is a ſavage ſort of hoſpitality.

Secondly, All factions in any ſtate would be at an end, if every member thereof were contented, that every one of his fellow-members, who was not an enemy to the government, might, having equal pretence of merit, enjoy equal privileges with himſelf.

Thirdly, The occaſions of war, and law-ſuits, would be taken away; ſince nothing but manifeſt wrong can be the juſt cauſe of either.

And, *Fourthly*, There would be no private quarrels and uneaſineſs among neighbours; ſince, by this rule of doing as we would be done unto, all raſh cenſures, ſharp reflections, and ungrounded ſuſpicions and jealouſies, which are the ſeeds of private animoſities, are taken away. And hereby we may expect a plentiful ſtore of God's bleſſings among us, who will meaſure out his kindneſs to us, in the ſame manner as we meaſure out ours to one another.

The reaſon why religion ſhould be both a ſhort and plain inſtitution, will appear if you conſider

the common circumſtances and conditions of men in this world. For though your Ladyſhip, and many more, have leiſure enough to read and digeſt whole volumes of uſeful knowledge (if there be any ſuch), yet the greateſt part of mankind, being neceſſarily employed in making daily proviſions for themſelves and their families, and in diſcharging the common offices of life, cannot attend to any religious inſtitution which is either difficult or tedious.

It is certain, that the whole life of man is not ſufficient for him to read all the controverſies which have been written, upon pretence of religion; but it is as certain, that God never lays on us a greater taſk, than what he affords us both abilities and opportunities to perform; wherefore we may conclude, that ſince the duties of religion are laid in common upon all, the poor day-labourer muſt have ability and opportunity ſufficient to inſtruct himſelf therein, without hindering the conſtant work of his calling. And in all this the wiſdom and goodneſs of God are made known by adapting our duties to our circumſtances of life.

From hence you may ſee that you may ſave yourſelf the trouble of reading the long and tedious diſputes which, with ſuch intemperate zeal, are always in agitation among the ſeveral parties of chriſtians. Indeed, the true chriſtian inſtitution being ſhort, it cannot admit of being ſpun out into

long controverſies: And, though I have read many books of controverſial divinity, I do not remember, that I have met with any one controverſy, about the matter of *mere* religion; as whether I ſhould maintain in my heart, a high reverence and veneration for Almighty God; whether I ought to walk before him in ſincerity and uprightneſs; whether or no I ſhould be thankful to him, for all the benefits which I have received from him; whether I ſhall ſubmit to his will with patience, and endeavour to govern my paſſions; to bring them to a due moderation and temper, by making them ſubject to the law of reaſon; whether I ſhould be true to my promiſe, juſt in my dealings, charitable to the poor, and ſincere in my devotions; whether I ſhould be temperate and ſober, modeſt and chaſte, and demean myſelf in an humble, civil, and agreeable manner towards thoſe with whom I converſe; whether I ſhould be heartily ſorry when I come ſhort of my duty, and ſhould be watchful in the denial of my irregular appetites, paſſions, and evil inclinations, for the future; in ſhort, it has not (that I know of) been diſputed, whether juſtice, benignity, meekneſs, charity, moderation, patience, and ſobriety, ſhould be received into our affections; or whether we ſhould love God, and our neighbour:—*orthodoxy of faith* is made the pretence of controverſy; but the one thing neceſſary, is *orthodoxy of practice.*

I know

I know your Ladyſhip will not be pleaſed with a diſcourſe upon the ſubject of religion, unleſs devotion has its due place in it; nor ought it indeed to be left out; becauſe thankfulneſs is a neceſſary *part* of religion, and prayer is the *preſervative* of the whole. A frequent repetition of our thanks for all the benefits which we enjoy, preſerves in our minds the conſideration of God, as the greateſt and beſt of beings; and thereby nouriſhes veneration and gratitude. In like manner, prayer for pardon of ſin, and for preſervation of our perſons, is a conſtant recognition of the mercy and bounty of God. But prayer againſt the power of ſin, is the actual withdrawing of our inclinations from evil; and prayer for any grace, is an actual application of our minds, to attain the particular virtue for which we pray.

But, together with theſe more direct and ſolemn exerciſes and ſeaſons of devotion of which I have been ſpeaking, I would earneſtly recommend to you to accuſtom yourſelf to *a ſort of habitual and occaſional devotion*, as very proper to preſerve the ſtrongeſt impreſſions of religion upon your mind.

It may be obſerved, that many who are very punctual in keeping to their exact times and forms of devotion, have fallen ſhort of any viſible improvement in virtue. The ſame pride, forwardneſs, falſehood, covetouſneſs, and bitterneſs of ſpirit, have appeared in many who have been

conſtant frequenters of the public, as well as cloſet, forms of prayer, *as if God had not been in all their thoughts*; the reaſon whereof ſeems to be, becauſe their formal petitions ſuperſede their habitual endeavours. Men are apt to think, that ſince they ſpend in every day, ſuch a portion of time in prayer, they have done all their part; and ſo they leave God-Almighty to take care of the event. And this is indeed all we *can* do, when we make our petitions to our benefactors upon earth, *viz.* offer up our requeſts to them, either by word or writing, and then only expect their anſwer.

But 'tis otherwiſe with relation to God. Our petitions to *him* muſt not take off from our conſtant endeavours to perform that work, for which we pray his enablement. And this occaſional devotion, which I would recommend, is in its own nature a conſtant endeavour after virtue, as well as a ſerious petition for it. For it ariſeth from a frequent obſervation of ourſelves, in our particular occurring circumſtances; from which obſervation ſuitable deſires will almoſt neceſſarily flow. As, if at any time I find that I have done an ill thing, immediately upon the diſcovery, I beg God's pardon, and reſolve to make recompenſe for the ill which I have done: Or, if I have deſigned any evil in my heart, and preſently beg pardon of him who knoweth the ſecrets thereof; in ſo doing I have given check to its progreſs. In like manner, if I have ſpoken

ſlanderouſly,

ſlanderouſly, raſhly, or injurioufly concerning any one, and, upon recollection thereof, I aſk forgiveneſs of God, and deſire that I may not do the like for the future, but, on the contrary, that I may govern my tongue better; in all this, I am labouring to withdraw my ſoul from evil, and to form myſelf upon a principle of virtue.

Every night, and morning, are proper times of leiſure, to call to mind the preſervation, ſupport, and advantages, we have received the day, or night, preceding. And this recollection, being accompanied with thankfulneſs to our great Preſerver, is the actual continuance and carrying on of our gratitude to God. If I perceive pride, or paſſion, to ariſe in my heart, ſo that I am apt to put a great value upon every thing I do, and deſpiſe others: Or, if I find myſelf eagerly concerned for any little worldly advantage, or any ſmall punctilio of honour; and hereupon I beg of God for an humble ſpirit, and an heavenly mind; I am herein endeavouring to expel the poiſon of ſin, by its proper antidote.

We cannot but feel the diſorder of our minds, as much as the diſeaſes of our bodies. And the cauſes of a diſordered mind, are much more eaſily diſcerned, than the cauſes of a bodily diſtemper. For either my mind is troubled for want, or loſſes, or it may be for the proſperity of others, or I want a revenge, or becauſe I cannot have my will in

what

what I designed. Upon these, or such like occasions, the proper cure is devotional, in begging God's pardon for my discontent; and being desirous that my will should be submitted to his, who has taught me that I should not return evil for evil, but that I should love my neighbour as myself. This sort of soliloquy, and occasional mental address to God, is a sure way to compose the disorders of our thoughts. For the growing power of any sin, is most certainly suppressed, by introducing the opposite virtue into our desires.

The same method may be used as to sins of omission. A serious person will observe neglects of common duties, which respect either God, or man. He cannot but take notice, how much he has neglected his business, or his health; how little he has considered God as his owner, governor, and benefactor; and how small a portion of what God has blessed him with, he has laid out upon the good of his fellow-creatures. And if hereupon, a man is seriously desirous to become more dutiful to God, more useful to himself, and beneficial to others, he is therein actually bending his mind to supply his former omissions.

This casual devotion, arising from the observation of ourselves, under the common circumstances of life, (although it can have no set times and forms prescribed to it,) will be very effectual to produce, preserve, and increase, a true sense of religion within us.

And,

And, if you are pleaſed to apply your thoughts hereunto, as occaſion ſhall direct you, this devotion will ſoon become habitual, cuſtomary and eaſy. And its returns, which will be frequent and ſhort, will be a continual reſtraint from evil-doing, and an actual exerciſe of virtue.

This exerciſe, which I have been preſcribing, is commonly reſerved to be performed all at once, in an actual preparation before receiving the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*; which is uſually performed, by the help of an artificial catalogue of ſins, methodically collected out of the ten commandments; according to which catalogue, ſet forms of confeſſions are drawn up, which the preparant is to take upon content; and without any ſort of judgement or diſcretion of his own, he confeſſes himſelf guilty of the ſins therein mentioned, together with all their aggravations, though, it may be, many of them were of ſuch a heinous nature, as it never entered into his heart to commit. And if theſe catalogues, and confeſſional forms, are read over once a quarter of a year, or, it may be, once a month, againſt the uſual ſacrament-day, the work of preparation is thought to be well paſſed over.

Yet I cannot but think it better, to keep a conſtant cuſtomary watch over ourſelves, and upon the firſt diſcovery of any evil deſign or action, immediately to retract it within our own hearts,

as

as in the preſence of God, and by mental prayer, proper to the occaſion, arm ourſelves againſt committing the like for the future. Hereby you diſcharge a duty in its proper ſeaſon, which is better than to delay it to a prefixed diſtance of time; for what is moſt freſh in memory, will make the moſt lively impreſſion upon us, but may in a little time be forgotten. Beſides, we are apt to turn forms into formalities; and a *natural* diſcharge of religious duties muſt be more improving than an *artificial* one.

And by this your Ladyſhip ſees the reaſon, why I have written a diſcourſe of *religion* in general, in anſwer to your letter, wherein you wrote only concerning the *Lord's Supper*, *viz.* becauſe I eſteem a ſerious well-inclined temper of mind, to be the beſt preparation, either for that, or any other of the ordinances of Jeſus Chriſt, that we may partake of them with advantage and delight.

David adviſes us to delight ourſelves in the Lord; *that is*, in all his ways and ordinances. And I cannot ſee, why our preparation for the Lord's table, and participation at it, ſhould be accompanied with greater anxieties of mind, than our communicating in any other holy office; ſuch as public prayer, or preaching. We expect the ſame bleſſing of God, in the improvement of our virtues, from all of theſe ordinances alike. And why with terror upon our minds we ſhould uſe any of thoſe

means,

means, which God has ordained for our good, I do not underſtand. A man indeed ought to perform every religious office, ſeriouſly, and ſoberly; but fear, by amuſing and diſtracting the mind, is apt to render the ordinance unprofitable.

Men ought likewiſe to be diſcouraged from coming to prayer, preaching, or communicating at the Lord's table, with a careleſs, or profane temper of mind; becauſe ſuch unpreparedneſs does harden men's hearts, and renders the ordinance unprofitable. Such as this was the caſe of the *Corinthians*, who, in celebrating the *Lord's Supper*, were ſo inconſiderate of what they came to do, that ſome of them were *drunk* at the Lord's table, as you read, 1 *Cor.* xi. 21. and to this their profane behaviour, thoſe texts of ſcripture do particularly relate, which affright ſome men from, and others in, receiving the ſacrament: On this account it was ſaid, by St. *Paul*, *That they were guilty of the body and blood of Chriſt: and did eat and drink damnation to themſelves, not diſcerning the Lord's body*, ver, 27. 29. *that is*, by ſuch a profane and unworthy communicating, they called down God's *judgments* upon themſelves; for ſo the word *damnation* ought to be underſtood, becauſe it refers to the *judgments* ſpecified in the following verſe, where it is ſaid, that, *For this cauſe*, (*viz.* of drunken communicating) *many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep*, that is, *die*, ver. 30. Now to avoid theſe *judgments*, he exhorts them to

examine

examine themſelves, that is, to conſider with themſelves, what was the meaning of that duty which they were to perform at the Lord's table; which duty was this, *viz.* to call to mind the death of Jeſus Chriſt. And this commemoration is by St. *Paul* ſtyled, *Diſcerning the Lord's body.*

The viſible ſigns of our Saviour's death, which we diſcern on the Lord's table, do prepare our minds to contemplate a divine perſon, who, for his great charity to the ſtupid world, ſuffered the higheſt injuſtice, with ſuch an invincible patience, and heroic fortitude, as was ſuperior to the ſharpeſt malice of his enemies; thereby ſetting before us the brighteſt example of an unſhaken reſolution to do good, in ſpite of all diſcouragements.

You will perceive, Madam, by this diſcourſe, that the chriſtian religion is a wiſe, a plain, and a ſhort inſtitution; the belief whereof was deſigned to ſave our ſouls from the power and danger of ſin, by ingrafting virtuous habits in our minds. You will likewiſe perceive, that I hold it neceſſary to keep a conſtant watch over ourſelves, to repent as often as we perceive ourſelves to tranſgreſs, and, by occaſional mental devotion, incline our hearts to obſerve the law of Chriſt; and all this in order to build up a habit of virtue within us. You will alſo perceive, that the contemplation of the death of Chriſt, with all its circumſtances, tends to the ſame admirable end.

And

And if theſe, or any other, means ſhall work upon you to be generouſly juſt, to bear a good-will to all men, to do what good you can, and to be unconcerned for the events of things which are not within your power; you will be eaſy within yourſelf, and ſatisfied in your own conſcience, which is the dawn of heaven upon earth; and you may cheerfully communicate at any time.

A SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE END AND DESIGN OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THIS ordinance, which is commonly called the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion, and ſometimes the Euchariſt, is not an invention of men, or a ceremony deviſed by chriſtians out of their own heads, or inſtituted by the clergy of their own authority; but is an expreſs inſtitution and command of our Lord himſelf, who hath appointed it to be obſerved and celebrated, in a devout and religious manner, by all his diſciples, to the end of the world.

This is abundantly evident from the hiſtory of our Saviour's paſſion, as it is recorded in the goſpels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*; and from what the apoſtle *Paul* ſays to the church of *Corinth*, in the

11th chapter of his firſt epiſtle to them; where, reproving them for ſome abuſes they had been guilty of in the celebration of this ordinance, contrary to the deſign for which it was appointed, he acquaints them, that he had received it from the Lord as an inſtitution of his religion, which he was to teach as ſuitable to the churches he ſhould plant, to be obſerved by them, and by all the churches of *Chriſt*, till his ſecond coming; and he tells them that he had accordingly delivered it unto them as he had received it from the Lord; and then he proceeds to give them an account of its firſt inſtitution, and of the end and deſign for which it was appointed, and exhorts them to obſerve it for the future according to that, and not ſuffer it to be any longer perverted and abuſed, as it had been among them of late.

The action itſelf conſiſts in taking bread, giving thanks over it, breaking it, and eating of it; then in taking a cup into which wine had been poured, giving thanks over it, and drinking of it.

This is the external action: and the deſign of it, as a religious rite or ceremony, is to repreſent, ſhew forth, or make an open public commemoration of our Saviour's death, and the manner of it; the bread which is broken being a ſymbol or repreſentation of his body which was broken on the tree; and the wine, a ſymbol or repreſentation of

his

his blood ſhed upon the croſs, for the remiſſion of the ſins of many; that is, for the confirmation of that covenant wherein God hath promiſed the remiſſion of ſins to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who ſincerely embrace the goſpel of his Son, who truly repent of their ſins, and forſake them, and carefully endeavour, for the future, to obey his holy laws, and improve themſelves daily in piety and virtue.

Whether the bread that is uſed in the celebration of this ordinance be leavened or unleavened; whether the wine be pure, or mixed with water; whether the thankſgiving be uſed only once for all, or repeated before the giving of the cup, which ſeems indeed to have been the practice at the beginning; whether this inſtitution be celebrated in the evening, or any other time of the day; whether faſting, or after a temperate meal; whether in an upper room, or in any other place; whether ſitting, or leaning, or ſtanding, or kneeling; theſe and the like circumſtances, being no parts of the action itſelf, nor having any relation to, or connection with, the deſign of it, are matters of indifferency, and left to the liberty of chriſtians: there is nothing determined about them in the New Teſtament, and therefore none ſhould take upon them to make any fixed regulations or canons about ſuch matters; but in theſe, or the like, indifferent things, which are not neceſſary to be determined, every chriſtian

ſhould be leſt to his own diſcretion: for the inſtitution may be duly and rightly adminiſtered, and chriſtians may partake of it worthily and acceptably, either in the one or the other of theſe ways that have been mentioned; yea even though in the ſame congregation, and at the ſame time, ſome ſhould receive it one way, and ſome another: chriſtians ſhould not be ſuperſtitiouſly ſcrupulous about theſe little things; nor ſhould chriſtian churches take upon them to exerciſe authority in matters of this nature, which are not determined in the word of God, which do not belong to the action itſelf, nor affect any of the ends and purpoſes for which it was appointed, and which are chiefly to be regarded in our celebration of it.

From the accounts we have of the inſtitution of this ordinance, both by the evangeliſts and the apoſtle *Paul*, we plainly ſee for what end it was appointed, and conſequently with what views, with what diſpoſitions and affections, we ought to partake of it: for the efficacy of it, or the good to be obtained by the receiving of it, doth not depend upon the mere external action of eating and drinking; but upon the doing it with meditations and affections ſuitable to the deſign for which it was inſtituted.

Now the chief and principal end for which this rite was appointed by our Lord, was to be a ſtanding memorial of his ſufferings and death, and a

ſolemn

ſolemn public commemoration of them, with praiſe and thankſgiving: *This* (ſaith he) *is my body, which is broken for you;* as much as to ſay, This bread which is broken and diſtributed among you, is the ſymbol, or the ſign and repreſentation, of my body crucified and broken for you; *Do this*, that is, *take it, and eat of it, in remembrance of me*, or for a commemoration of my love in dying for you. And of the cup he ſays, *This cup is the New Teſtament*, or, as it ſhould rather have been rendered, *the new covenant, in my blood, ſhed for the remiſſion of the ſins of many; drink ye all of it; for as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew forth*, or *ſhew ye forth, the Lord's death till he come.* The meaning is, The wine contained in this cup is the ſymbol, the ſign and repreſentation, of my blood, ſhed for the confirmation of the new covenant, wherein the remiſſion of ſins is promiſed and aſſured to all, who, becoming my diſciples and members of my church, ſhall truly repent of their ſins, and forſake them, and ſhall endeavour for the future to yield a ſincere obedience to the laws and precepts of my goſpel, and perſevere therein to the end: drink ye all of this cup in remembrance of me; for by this action of eating of this bread, and drinking of this cup, as the ſymbols and repreſentations of my body broken and blood ſhed, ye do ſhew forth and publickly declare my death, and your own thankful remembrance of it; and it is my will you ſhould

do

do ſo to the end of the world, even till I ſhall come again the ſecond time, without ſin, unto ſalvation, that is, not to offer myſelf as a ſacrifice for ſin a ſecond time, but to confer on all my ſincere and faithful followers, that ſalvation and happineſs which I have promiſed to them; which promiſe is ſealed with my blood, and farther confirmed by my reſurrection from the dead, and aſcenſion into the heavens. This ordinance then is a ſtanding and perpetual memorial, an open and public commemoration, of the ſufferings and death of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt:* and this is the firſt and principal end for which it was appointed.

But there is another, or rather two others, which naturally ariſe out of this firſt one, and are cloſely connected with it; and which are alſo pretty plainly taught as ſuch by the apoſtle *Paul* in 1 *Cor.* x. 16, 17. They are theſe, to wit, to be a token and teſtimony of our communion and fellowſhip with *Jeſus Chriſt*, and with all our chriſtian brethren: the apoſtle's words are theſe, *The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the communion of the blood of Chriſt? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? for, becauſe there is one bread,* we, being many, are one body; for we are all partakers of that bread.* As if he had ſaid, The cup of thankſgiving, over which we give thanks, and of which we drink, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper,

* So this verſe would have been better rendered.

per, is it not a token, a public teſtimony and declaration, of our communion and fellowſhip with the Lord *Jeſus*, whoſe blood was ſhed for the remiſſion of ſins? And the bread which we break, and eat of in that ordinance, is it not a token, a public teſtimony and declaration, of our communion and fellowſhip with that bleſſed Lord whoſe body was broken for us upon the tree? Is not this action, which we perform in obedience to his command, a public and ſolemn acknowledgment of our religious regard to him, as our Saviour and Redeemer, our Lord, our Lawgiver, and our Judge; is it not an open profeſſion in the face of the world that we are his diſciples and followers, that we embrace his doctrine and religion, and are not aſhamed of his goſpel; that we approve of, and agree to, the terms of that moſt gracious covenant which was ſealed with his blood, and ſincerely conſent to be governed by his laws? Undoubtedly it is; and our partaking of this feaſt in memory of his death, is an open declaration and ſolemn teſtimony of all this.

And farther, by our coming together into one place, to partake of this one bread, and drink of this one cup, as a religious commemoration of the death of *Chriſt*; we, all of us, who join in the celebration of this ordinance, though many in number, and dwelling, perhaps, ſome of us, in far diſtant places, do hereby declare that we are all one body, and acknowledge ourſelves, with all our chriſtian

brethren

brethren, wherever they dwell on the face of the earth, to be one ſociety or community, united to the one Lord by a lively faith and ſincere obedience, and to one another by the bond of a fervent charity and a brotherly love; and ſo, by the joint partaking of this ordinance, we acknowledge ourſelves the fellow-diſciples of Chriſt, the one Lord and Mediator, and the joint worſhippers of the one God and Father of all, the temples of the ſame holy ſpirit, and the heirs of the ſame heavenly inheritance.

We do not by this action profeſs our communion merely and only with that particular church or congregation with whom we are worſhipping at the time, or with that particular party or denomination of chriſtians with whom we are aſſociated, and ſtatedly join in worſhip; or with this or the other national church; but we acknowledge ourſelves to be in union and fellowſhip with all who make a credible profeſſion of chriſtianity, (that is,) with all who profeſs the chriſtian religion, and do not contradict that profeſſion by the wickedneſs of their lives, and that, together with them, we are all one body, united under *Chriſt*, our common head; we are one religious community, one ſpiritual kingdom under the government of that king whom God hath ſet over us, even *Jeſus Chriſt* his ſon, whom he hath made Lord of all, by whoſe laws we all profeſs to be ruled and governed, to whoſe authority

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and dominion we are all ſubject, and to whom we are all of us accountable for our conduct.

Theſe now being the ends for which this ordinance was appointed, it becomes us, as often as we partake of it, to keep them in our minds, to fix our meditations upon them, and to exerciſe our affections, and form our purpoſes and reſolutions, according to them: if we do ſo, it will be a means of ſtrengthening our faith and hope, of increaſing our love to God, and our love to *Jeſus Chriſt* our bleſſed Redeemer, and to all the ſaints and houſehold of God; and it will help us forward in the way of holineſs, and engage us more effectually to a patient continuance in well doing, and to the conſtant and zealous practice of every thing that is truly pious, virtuous and good; in a word, it will diſpoſe us for farther uſefulneſs in this world, and to a greater progreſs in moral and ſpiritual perfection, and conſequently prepare and qualify us for higher degrees of happineſs in the world that is to come.

But if we attend upon this inſtitution of our religion in a careleſs unthinking manner, only as an empty ceremony, as a matter of form and cuſtom; or to pleaſe men, and gain or preſerve a reputation of ſanctity; or if we ſubſtitute our attendance upon it in the place of real righteouſneſs; and uſe it as a kind of commutation, and by way of atonement for ſome immoral practices we are guilty of; or

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for any other base and sinister end; we quite pervert it from the purpose for which it was appointed; *we eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body*; we use it, in effect, as if it were a common meal, and are guilty of profaning a sacred religious institution of divine appointment.

When the apostle *Paul*, in the place already quoted, (1 *Cor.* xi. 23, &c.) reproves the Corinthians for certain abuses which had crept in among them in the administration of the Lord's Supper; in order to rectify these abuses, he lays before them a plain and true account of the institution itself, and of the end and design of it, as he had received it from the Lord, who had communicated the whole gospel to him by revelation: after which he adds this advice, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of* that *bread, and drink of* that *cup*. So our translators have rendered the words, which should have been translated in this manner, *But let a man prove himself*, and THUS, that is, according to what I have now told you is the design of this institution, *thus let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup*. As if he had said, "I have given you an account of this institution as I received it from the Lord, and of the chief and principal end for which he appointed it; by that let every one examine and try himself, his temper of mind, his views and intentions, his carriage and conduct, and *thus*, according to the end and design of the institution, as a memorial of the

the death of *Chriſt*, and a token of communion with him, and with the whole chriſtian church, *let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.*"

There is no reaſon to ſuppoſe that the apoſtle by his direction intended to bind chriſtians to enter into a particular examination of the whole paſt courſe of their lives every time that they deſign to partake of the Lord's Supper; this indeed is an uſeful exerciſe, and very proper to be obſerved ſometimes, on ſome ſpecial occaſions, and for ſome perſons; but it does not ſeem to be neceſſary for all chriſtians every time they may have an intention to join with their brethren in celebrating the memory of their Saviour's paſſion by this inſtitution; there is nothing in this diſcourſe of the apoſtle, or the occaſion upon which he gave theſe directions to the Corinthian church concerning the Lord's Supper, to lead us to underſtand the words in that ſenſe; nor is ſuch a particular examination neceſſary, every time that a ſerious well-diſpoſed chriſtian would chooſe to receive the communion; though it is proper here to be obſerved, that frequent ſelf-examination is a very uſeful and important duty; for it ſerves to ſhew us, or bring to mind, what is, or has been, amiſs, and needs to be corrected, in our temper or conduct; it helps us to know ourſelves, what manner of perſons we are, and what is our true and real character, and this will diſpoſe us to modeſty and humility; it will make us ſenſible what need we

 have

have of God's grace and forgivenefs, and the affiftance of his holy fpirit; it will difpofe us alfo to the exercife of charity, forbearance, and forgivenefs towards others; and give us occafion of praife and thankfgiving to God for his fparing mercies, and his gracious promifes of acceptance upon the moft reafonable and condefcending terms; befide many other advantages which cannot be mentioned or infifted on at prefent.

But the examination which the apoftle recommends, as previoufly neceffary to the Lord's Supper, fo far as may be judged from the context, feems to be this; that any chriftian intending to go to the Lord's table, fhould, in order to partake of that ordinance in a religious manner, and fo as to profit by it, and not incur the guilt of profaning a facred and folemn inftitution of religion, appointed by *Chrift* himfelf; he fhould (I fay) ferioufly confider the end and defign for which it was appointed, and reflect whether the temper of his mind, and frame of his fpirit, be fuch as is fuitable to that end; and having, upon fuch ferious reflection, found that it is fo, let him accordingly, with a view to that end, and with meditations and affections fuitable to it, *eat of the bread, and drink of the cup.*

We fhould, therefore, before we go to the Lord's table, reflect a little, and think with ourfelves, what is it we are going about? what are we going to do? are we only going to eat and drink as at a common meal

meal for the refreſhment and ſupport of our bodies? No, this is not the deſign of the inſtitution; we have houſes to eat and drink in for that end, and are not called to aſſemble together in the church for our common meals; but we are going to celebrate a religious rite appointed by our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, as a memorial of his dying love, and a public acknowledgment of our being his diſciples, who have communion and fellowſhip with him, and with all our chriſtian brethren, and who purpoſe, by the help of God's grace, to pleaſe and obey him in all things, and to walk in his ways all the days of our lives.

It becomes us then to inquire again, whether we feel in our minds a juſt ſenſe of the advantages we enjoy by the goſpel revelation, and a thankful remembrance of what our bleſſed Saviour hath done and ſuffered for us, to deliver us from the power and dominion of ſin, and the miſeries conſequent upon it? whether we do really approve of the terms of that covenant which he hath ſealed with his blood, and heartily conſent to them? and are truly willing to forſake all ſin, all impiety, all vice, wickedneſs and immorality, and to conform ourſelves in our hearts and lives to the laws of godlineſs, righteouſneſs, charity and ſobriety, as being moſt excellent in themſelves, and naturally conducive to promote the proper perfection and true happineſs of our nature? and whether we have a ſincere love

to

to all our christian brethren, and a communion in heart and affection with all the saints and household of God? If this be truly and indeed the temper and disposition of our minds, and the frame of our hearts, towards God, towards Jesus Christ his son, towards all our fellow-christians, and towards true religion, goodness, and virtue, we are suitably disposed, and duly prepared, to go to the Lord's table: let every one therefore try himself by this test; and, having found his heart to correspond to it, let him, according to the ends for which this sacred feast was appointed, and with a serious view to them, *eat of the bread, and drink of the cup*; humbly hoping for God's blessing upon him in his religious attendance upon this ordinance; and for his favourable acceptance of him in this action, done in obedience to the command of his dying Lord, to shew forth his death till he come.

FINIS.

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THE CATECHIST:

OR,

AN INQUIRY INTO

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES,

CONCERNING THE

ONLY TRUE GOD,

AND OBJECT OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

By THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, A. M.

——— *Instead of receiving the word of God, they set themselves against it, without alleging any other excuse than the length of time wherein they have continued in their errors; as if there were any prescription of time against* HIM, *who made the world and ages, and to whom all things are present.*

Brandt's Hist. of the Reform. in the Low-Countries, Anno 1565, vol. 1. p. 159.

LONDON:

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCXCII.

ADVERTISEMENT.

It is for the moſt part taken for granted, in theſe INQUIRIES, that there is ſufficient ſatiſfactory evidence for the facts related in the Old and New Teſtament. Of the latter, Dr. Lardner's great work, "The Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory," and his "Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies to the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion," will enable thoſe to judge, who have not leiſure or learning to conſult ancient authors for themſelves. And the divine revelations recorded in the books of the Old Teſtament, and the facts connected with them, beſides their own independent evidence, on which they ſtand, have great additional weight, and full confirmation given them, to the chriſtian, by their having been ſeriouſly believed and received by Jeſus and his apoſtles, who continually refer and appeal to theſe books, and to the divine authority of Moſes and the prophets.

Firſt publiſhed in 1781.

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PREFACE.

A great departure from the truth among Christ's followers. The design of this work. The use and importance of the Scriptures. The doctrine of the Divine Unity clearly and plainly revealed in them. Mistakes of Mr. Gibbon *concerning the Introduction to St. John's gospel. A principal object of Mr.* Gibbon's *history.*

To the CHRISTIAN READER.

ALMOST 1800 years are past since Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master, received a divine commission, and by the powers intrusted *(a)* with

(a) It was after prayer to God for his direction and assistance, that Jesus chose his 12 disciples. Luke vi. 12, 13. Acts i. 2. This last should be translated *after he had given commandment to the apostles, whom he —had chosen by the holy Spirit.* See Dr. Benson's History, &c. of the christian religion, vol. 1. p. 13, 14.) Upon this passage Bp. Pearce has this honest note; for he never had any reserves in speaking what appeared to him to be the truth. " Jesus is every where almost represented as acting and speaking by the

with him imparted the ſame to certain men *(a)* his apoſtles to teach the knowledge of *the only (b) true God, the Father*, and the way to eternal life. Theſe apoſtles and meſſengers of the moſt high God were laborious in fulfilling their great truſt, by their travels and preaching in moſt parts of the then known world, and by their writings which they left

the ſpirit of God, which (as John ſays, in ch. iii. 34.) was *not given by meaſure unto him.*" One wonders the good Biſhop ſhould ſtop here, and not ſee, that he could be none other but a creature who was thus under the continual guidance of God.

(a) John xvii. 18. *As thou (O Father,) has ſent me into the world, even ſo have I alſo ſent them into the world.* Obſerve here, that in our Saviour's account, and by his own interpretation, *to be ſent into the world* does not ſignify coming immediately from God and another world, into this; but it ſignifies the receiving of a divine commiſſion as a prophet or teacher; and nothing more. For Chriſt applies here the ſame phraſe of being *ſent into the world,* to his choſen diſciples, as to himſelf.

(b) — xvii. 1, 3. *O Father! this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom Thou haſt ſent*; or *to know, Jeſus whom Thou haſt ſent, to be the Chriſt*; ον απεςειλας, Ιησουν, Χριςον· as this laſt clauſe may more juſtly be tranſlated.

The following remark of our countryman Mr. John Biddle, M.A. of the univerſity of Oxford, a perſon of

left behind them, and which ſtill remain; and great ſucceſs attended their labours. But the doctrine of the Divine Unity began to be corrupted very ſoon by heathen inventions: and the greater part of chriſtians have now for many ages acknowledged and worſhiped two other perſons as gods equal to the Father, who is God alone bleſſed for ever; by which Jews, Mahometans, and ſerious

of eminent learning and piety, written 140 years ago, merits more attention than hath hitherto been paid it, as do all his valuable works: "Though *Luther* and *Calvin*, ſaith he, deſerve much praiſe for the pains they took in cleanſing our religion from ſundry idolatrous pollutions of the roman Antichriſt, yet are the dregs ſtill left behind: I mean the groſs opinion touching *three perſons in one God.* Which error not only made way for thoſe pollutions, but lying at the bottom, corrupteth almoſt our whole religion. For firſt, it introduceth *three Gods*, and ſo ſubverteth the *Unity of God*, ſo frequently inculcated in the ſcripture. Neither is it enough for the ſalving this abſurdity, to ſay with *Athanaſius*, that *though the Father be God, the Son God, and the holy Spirit God; yet there are not three Gods but one God.* For who is there, if at leaſt he dare make uſe of reaſon in his religion, who ſeeth not that this is as ridiculous, as if one ſhould ſay, *Peter is an apoſtle, James an apoſtle, John an apoſtle; yet there are not three apoſtles, but one apoſtle,* &c."

A Confeſſion of Faith touching the Holy Trinity. Preface. London, 1648.

Deiſts have been rendered averſe to the goſpel, and its firſt divine teachers diſcredited, as if they either did not underſtand this prime capital article of all true religion, or did not expreſs themſelves clearly and properly about it.

This little book, Reader, propoſeth to remove this unjuſt aſperſion thrown upon the goſpel; and to ſhew, by plain and eaſy deductions from the ſcriptures, that Jeſus and his apoſtles knew no other God, but the Father; and alſo, that they never taught that there was any other Being or Perſon, to whom we were to offer up our prayers, but this heavenly Father of Jeſus, and of us all. And it cannot but be deſireable for us, to be aſſured, upon the beſt grounds, who is the God that made us, and to whom we are to direct our prayers.

Errors ſo deeply rooted and of ſuch long ſtanding, as thoſe which are here oppoſed, cannot be expected to be relinquiſhed all at once. But upon the young and unprejudiced, it may be hoped that the plain arguments of ſcripture, and ſtrong repeated declarations of Chriſt and his apoſtles, will not be wholly loſt.

If then, by what is here delivered from the authority of the acknowleged word of God, you ſhall perceive and learn, that you have been hitherto all your life worſhiping thoſe that are no gods, and who cannot hear, or help you: the uſe that you are bound to make of it is, henceforth to worſhip

and

and pray to God, the Father only, in your public as well as private devotions; and to render to the bleſſed Jeſus, all the reverence, love, and honour, due to him, and eſpecially that obedience to the precepts of the goſpel, which he *(a)* required from all his followers: but at the ſame time to remember, that piety and virtue are above all knowlege; and that it is not ſo much by our zeal for any doctrines, however important, as by our love to *(b)* our brethren of mankind, that we are to approve ourſelves Chriſt's true diſciples.

It is an advantage not ſufficiently valued, which we reap from the ſacred writings, that we are therein aſſured, by indubitable divine authority, that there is a Being of infinite wiſdom, power, and goodneſs at the head of all things, who claims the devout homage, love, and confidence of his creatures.

For want of ſuch written authentic monuments of this great truth as are contained in *the Bible*, we ſee in what darkneſs and ignorance the different nations of the earth were involved in antient times. If ſome few individuals amongſt them were more

(a) John xiv. 15. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. N.B.* He never *commanded* men to worſhip himſelf.

(b) By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another. John xiii. 35,

enlightened, (as to the rational inquiring *(a)* mind the exiſtence of a firſt cauſe of all things wiſe and good is legible in the *great Bible of the univerſe* in the brighteſt characters;) their knowlege was of little ſervice to others. They themſelves joined and encouraged the people in the worſhip of their falſe gods, whom they derided in private among their ſelect friends; but had not the virtue or courage to ſpeak aloud.

In our own times, among thoſe who reject the ſcriptures, we rarely meet with any practical regards towards God, or worſhip of Him. Some are found to entertain gloomy doubts of the exiſtence of a creating and governing Mind; whilſt others, beſet with dark and narrow prejudices, take upon them to call in queſtion the goodneſs of the benevolent

(a) "The plain argument for the exiſtence of the Deity obvious to all, and carrying irreſiſtible conviction with it, ariſes from the evident contrivance and fitneſs of things for one another, which we meet with throughout all the parts of the univerſe. There is no need of nice or ſubtle reaſonings in this matter: a manifeſt contrivance immediately ſuggeſts a contriver. The admirable and beautiful ſtructure of things for final cauſes exalts our idea of the *Contriver:* the unity of the deſign ſhews him to be *One.*" &c. *Maclaurin's* Account of Sir Iſaac Newton's Philoſophical Diſcoveries, 8vo. p. 400.

lent Parent of all, and will not allow the world to be ſo well made, or its inhabitants ſo happy as they ought to be.

That there ſhould have been and ſubſiſted, even among chriſtians, ſo long, ſuch a ſtrange confuſed miſconception concerning the Deity, that HE is not one Perſon, one ſingle intelligent Agent, but three Perſons, three intelligent Agents: has not been owing to Divine Revelation, or to any obſcurity or heſitation in it about this point. For that there is one all-perfect Being, the father, creator, governor and preſerver of the univerſe, is not a point ſo difficult of comprehenſion, but that the commoneſt underſtanding might ſee and retain it, when made known, as it is made known in the books of Moſes and the hebrew prophets. This is apparent in fact from the hiſtory of the Iſraelites, to whom this knowlege of the *Divine Unity* was revealed by God himſelf, and who have ever ſince adhered to it. Even in their temporary deviations into the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, it is allowed that they ſtill retained the ſole ſupremacy of Jehovah. But ſince their return from the Babylonian captivity, for more than two thouſand years, they have never departed from the *Unitarian doctrine*, which Moſes their divine lawgiver delivered to them: and from him Mahomet borrowed it. So that it is from this original divine revelation, that the Mahometans in Europe, and all over the eaſt, are *Unitarians*, be-

lievers

lievers in, and worſhipers of the one only true God, and creator of all things.

Nor would there have been ſo early and laſting a defection from the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God, the Father, among chriſtians, who, together with their own receive alſo the hebrew ſcriptures as of divine authority, if philoſophy had not at a very early period obtruded upon them its vain dreams and fanciful ſpeculations concerning the nature of the Firſt Cauſe of all things and the manner of his operations, and thereby given birth to thoſe twofold and threefold diviſions of the Deity, borrowed from the eaſtern ſages and from Plato: which in no ſmall time darkened and nearly extinguiſhed the ſcriptural doctrine of the unity of God, and brought into the church the direct polytheiſm of three Perſons, three diſtinct and equal Gods; and from the ſame impure heathen ſource were derived that multitude of inferior deities, called ſaints, dead men and women, male and female, whoſe worſhip is kept up in many chriſtian countries, even to this day.

It is by availing himſelf of the weakneſs and prejudices of theſe firſt chriſtians and followers of Plato, that Mr. Gibbon endeavours to demoliſh the whole fabric of the goſpel at once, in the ſecond volume of his "Hiſtory of the decline and fall of the Roman empire." After having touched with no ordinary hand the character of this father of the

Academy

Academy and the ſtile of his philoſophy concerning the Deity, and ſhewn how he loſt himſelf by diving too deep into the unfathomable myſteries of the divine eſſence; he thus proceeds:

"The theology of Plato (vol. ii. p. 240.) might have been for ever confounded with the philoſophical viſions of the Academy, the Porch, and the Lycæum, if the name and divine attributes of the *Logos* had not been confirmed by the celeſtial pen of the laſt and moſt ſublime of the evangeliſts. The chriſtian revelation, which was conſummated under the reign of Nerva, diſcloſed to the world the amazing ſecret, that the *Logos*, who was with God from the beginning, and was God, who had made all things, and for whom all things had been made, was incarnate in the perſon of Jeſus of Nazareth; who had been born of a virgin, and ſuffered death on the croſs."

Leſt it ſhould not be ſufficiently attended to, that Plato, as our author ſoon after expreſſes himſelf, p. 242. "had marvelloufly anticipated one of the moſt ſurpriſing diſcoveries of the chriſtian revelation," he is diligent to mark it alſo in the margin of his work, that it may take the eye of the moſt curſory reader. For, from p. 237 to 240, you trace as follows; "The ſyſtem of Plato before Chriſt 360. "The Logos taught in the ſchool of Alexandria before Chriſt 300." (copied by a Jew into one of their apocryphal books called the Wiſdom

dom of Solomon) "Before Chrift 100. "Revealed "by the apoftle John, A. D. 97." So that according to this notation and computation of Mr. Gibbon, the principal fecret of the gofpel was known to and publifhed by the Athenian philofopher exactly 457 years before it was revealed by St. John, and therefore any extraordinary interpofition from heaven in favour of it might well have been fpared.

But we fhall eafily get clear of thefe confequences in which Mr. Gibbon would involve us, if it can be made to appear, that St. John is very far from teaching any thing like Plato's doctrine in the beginning of his gofpel; that he therein makes no new difcoveries, nor advances any thing different from what is found in the other evangelifts and apoftles who wrote before him; and moreover that the date of his gofpel is probably much miftaken by our hiftorian.

St. John borrows nothing from Plato.

It muft be owned that fome of the early Fathers, as they are called, who were Platonifts, and other chriftian writers fince, who have copied after them, have given into the notion, in which Mr. Gibbon triumphs fo much, that the *Word*, *Logos*, in the beginning of the gofpel of St. John, is Plato's *Logos*, a fecond god of his invention. But the difciple of Mofes and favourite of Jefus could never promulgate any fuch polytheiftical doctrine; and if he wrote

wrote upon the ſubject muſt directly confute it, as he really has done in this very place.

For in truth, the apoſtle John makes no new revelation here of any thing diſcovered particularly to himſelf, tells nothing but what had always been profeſſed and taught by the other apoſtles, nothing but what the meaneſt chriſtian, who knew any thing of his religion, was from the firſt acquainted with. In ſhort, the whole ſecret of this prefatory part of his work is, to declare in general the divine origin of the goſpel; that by the mighty *Word*, or *Wiſdom* of God (which is the ſame as God himſelf) all things whatſoever were made: that from this *Word* or *Wiſdom* of God came all the *light* or knowlege of the way to the divine favour and future happineſs, that had been at various times communicated to mankind; but above all that which was revealed by Jeſus Chriſt: in whom this *Word* or *Wiſdom* of God dwelt, that is, diſplayed itſelf in the moſt eminent manner, for the benefit and inſtruction of mankind. I truſt, that in ſome few of the following pages, this is proved to be the deſign of the apoſtle ſo directly and evidently from the ſacred writings, which are their own beſt interpreters, that I ſhould hope we may lay aſide Plato's doctrine for the future, and clear our apoſtle from the aſperſion of being a plagiary, and ſtealing the chief myſtery of his goſpel from that philoſopher.

Our

Of the true date of St. John's gospel.

Our historian follows many ancient and modern Divines, when he asserts that St. John wrote his gospel so late as the reign of Nerva, A. D. 97. But this has been a point by no means universally acceded to by christian critics. To name no other, Dr. Lardner, with that discernment, caution, and integrity that distinguish the true critic, and with all the learning and information necessary on the subject, has evinced the high probability of St. John having pen'd his gospel a little before the destruction of Jerusalem, that is, about *thirty years* before the date which Mr. Gibbon ascribes to it. And few, I should suppose, will be of a contrary sentiment, who will take the trouble to examine his arguments.

Christian writers who maintain that St. John, in the preface to his gospel, teaches a different doctrine from the other evangelists and apostles, and that a doctrine of the first importance, do not attend to the difficulties in which they entangle themselves, and which Mr. Gibbon is not studious to diminish. For it would then follow that the chief doctrine of the gospel was not revealed till all its divinely authorised preachers save one was dead: for we have no ground to think any of them but St. John were alive A. D. 97; which would make the other apostles to have preached all their lives without knowing, or at least without revealing the most important part of

of the gospel. But the contrary has been just now shewn, that St. John differs not in any point of revealed doctrine from the other writers of the New Testament.

The principal object of Mr. Gibbon's History.

It is not difficult for an attentive perufer of Mr. Gibbon's work to perceive, that the main design he has in view is to sink the credit of the Divine Revelation, which we believe to be comprized in the books of the Old and New Testament. And surely if he thinks its miraculous histories to be fabulous, as he seems to do, no one can blame him: he is rather to be commended for trying to expose them to that neglect and contempt which in that case they would well deserve. Real christianity can never suffer from such inquiries; as it loves and invites fair discussion. But it seems to be not quite so ingenuous and candid, as it may deceive and put unwary readers off their guard, that our historian should personate the real christian at the very time that he is undermining the system. For, in the first volume of his History, p. 450. when he begins more particularly to treat of what relates to christians, he makes this opening; "Our curiosity is "naturally prompted to inquire by what means the "christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory "over the established religions of the earth. To "this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer "may be returned; *that it was owing to the con-*

" *vincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the* " *ruling providence of its great Author.*" It is not easy to imagine that the writer of this paragraph should be any other than a sincere believer of the gospel. And yet in the very next sentence, he begins a long disquisition, the most laboured part of his work, in which he strives to prove that the christian religion might grow up and become established in the world, in the degree and to the extent it has been, by natural means, without any extraordinary interposition in its favour: from which it would follow, that the gospel is the mere creature and effect of human policy and contrivance. In this attempt Mr. Gibbon exerts his whole strength, which is not small or contemptible; calls in the aid of all the ancient and modern enemies to the christian name; but most avails himself of the ignorance, follies, and indiscretions of its injudicious friends, labouring at the same to destroy the foundation of the jewish as well as the christian revelation: for he well discerns that they must both stand or fall together.

In his second volume, where he resumes his account of christianity, in descanting on the first christian emperor's inducements to embrace it, he thus expresses himself, p. 186. " The partial and " increasing favour of Constantine may naturally " be referred to the esteem he entertained for the " moral character of the christians; and to a per- " suasion

" ſuaſion that the propagation of the goſpel would " increaſe the practice of private and public vir- " tue." And a little lower—" A prudent magi- " ſtrate might obſerve with pleaſure the progreſs " of a religion which diffuſed among the people a " pure, benevolent, and univerſal ſyſtem of ethics, " adapted to every duty, and every condition of " life, recommended as the will and reaſon of the " Supreme Deity, and enforced by the ſanction of " eternal rewards and puniſhments." An ordinary unſuſpecting reader would conclude from this high panegyric, that Mr. Gibbon held the chriſtian religion to be the greateſt bleſſing to mankind. Nevertheleſs it is inſtantly followed by a ſtudied picture and repreſentation of it which is quite the reverſe, and which continues to be exhibited throughout his whole work, when any thing reſpecting chriſtians and their religion comes before him. The principles and practice of thoſe very corrupt times of Conſtantine, when inſtead of the world coming over to the church, the church was brought over and converted to the world; are gravely related as the genuine effects of the goſpel. One would imagine from our author's deſcription, that *Pandora*'s box was opened again, and all kinds of evils and miſchiefs and irreconcileable enmities had iſſued out of it, and infected the earth, when chriſtianity came into it. But abatements will be made by the intelligent reader where there is ſo

viſible a bias one way, and the judgment perverted as an author's neceſſarily muſt be by looking only on the dark ſide of things. And beſides, hiſtory has to do only with the moſt ſtriking events, and the moſt forward active characters, which are not always the beſt; and our hiſtorian would not be likely to go out of his road to deſcribe the ſilent unnoticed effects of the goſpel, in the private walks of life, in promoting virtue and happineſs, which have always diſtinguiſhed it with advantage from heatheniſm in all times, and at its worſt periods.

Wit and irony on ſerious ſubjects may pleaſe thoughtleſs uninquiring minds; but the truth of Divine revelation reſts on too ſolid a foundation to be ſhaken by ſuch efforts. So ſtrong is the direct and poſitive evidence for the goſpel, that it can be overlooked and reſiſted only by a total indolence, invincible prejudice, or an univerſal ſcepticiſm: diſeaſes theſe alas! too common in our days, but for which the moſt palpable demonſtration is no cure. Mr. Gibbon exhibits a ſingular phenomenon in his own perſon as a writer; viz. a grave profeſſed hiſtorian, whoſe character ſhould be that of the moſt perfect impartiality, wearing a maſk, and diſſembling his real ſentiments, that he may have the better opportunity to put on his own colouring, whenever he has occaſion to treat of chriſtians and their religion. This is a circumſtance which in any other caſe would create a ſuſpicion of diſingenuous

genuous dealing and the undue prejudices of a party. We may venture however to pronounce, that chriſtianity will owe great obligations to our ingenious author, though it was much beſide his intention to ſerve it. For from the attention to the ſubject which has been excited by his writings, and the replies already given to ſome of the difficulties ſtarted by him, it is eaſy to ſee that the divine truth of the goſpel will be promoted by the objections he has made to it, as it has been by all that have been made, from Celſus's *(a)* time down to our own. And I am perſuaded all of them will be found equally void of reaſon as his inſinuation which gave occaſion to theſe remarks; viz. that the chief doctrine of St. John's goſpel and of the chriſtian revelation is nothing more than a borrowed fragment of Plato's philoſophy.

(a) This able and acute adverſary of chriſtianity flouriſhed not more than 70 years after the death of St. John. Whoever will take the trouble to ſee the proofs that he has furniſhed in its defence whilſt oppoſing it, as they are admirably deduced and drawn out by Dr. Lardner, ("Heathen and Jewiſh Teſtimonies, &c." vol. ii. ch. 18.) will at the ſame time ſee the fallacy and untruth of many things advanced againſt it by Mr. Gibbon.

END OF THE PREFACE.

THE

CATECHIST:

OR, AN INQUIRY INTO THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES, CONCERNING THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

INQUIRY I.

Concerning Jesus Christ, and his authority as a Divine Teacher.

I Have often been desirous of meeting you at some such convenient season of leisure as the present, said Eusebes to Artemon, that I might have the benefit of your friendly assistance in coming to a full and final determination of mind concerning the God whom we christians profess to worship. For I have been long dissatisfied with many things taught me in my youth upon the subject, which are made a part of belief necessary to salvation in the christian society of which I am a member, and much of the public worship of the congregation grounded upon them. I find no sufficient founda-

tion

tion in the ſcriptures for ſuch opinions and practice, yet am unable to confute ſome of thoſe arguments which are brought for their ſupport. And though I have taken ſome pains in ſtudying thoſe ſacred records, as becometh every one, I know you to have been more converſant in them, and with greater advantages and abilities: I therefore deſire you will give me leave to propoſe my queſtions and difficulties to you, and to bear with me, though I ſhould ſometimes appear too minute and tedious.

I cannot but approve your deſign, replied Artemon to Euſebes; and ſhall be happy to give you any aſſiſtance in my power to forward it. For it muſt be a moſt anxious ſtate to a good mind to fluctuate in uncertainty about ſuch an important point in morals and religion. And next to the care of doing nothing contrary to conſcience, or the inward ſenſe and judgment of our own minds, according to the knowlege we already have; you cannot be employed on a ſubject more neceſſary or uſeful, than in ſearching the ſcriptures to know the firſt great cauſe and author of all things, on whom we abſolutely depend for ever. Right or wrong opinions of the Deity unavoidably influence and form our temper and conduct, and conſequently our happineſs. And it is the duty of all to review the principles and opinions inſtilled into them in their tender age, by the authority of thoſe to whoſe care they were intruſted by divine providence, that

they

they may not remain always children: and every religious opinion and practice is to be brought to the test *(a)* of God's word, and to be retained or rejected as found to accord or disagree with it.

Eusebes. With your leave then, said Eusebes, I shall enter upon my task. And because Jesus Christ is held forth as God, even the most high God, in the church I belong to; and so far as I am acquainted, in all the public national churches of the world: that I may attain full satisfaction, who he was, and what was his true character, and that our inquiry may proceed in some order, I shall desire you to inform me, first of all; how we may be assured that there was such a person as *(b)* Jesus Christ, who was born 1780 years ago, at Bethlehem in Judea; but

(a) "The authority of Emperors, Kings, and Princes, is human. The authority of Councils, Synods, Bishops, and Presbyters, is human. The authority of the Prophets is divine and comprehending the sum of religion, reckoning Moses and the Apostles among the Prophets; and *if an angel from heaven preach any other gospel,* than what they have delivered, *let him be anathema*:" i. e. publicly disowned by the christian society. Gal. i. 8.

Sir *Isaac Newton*'s Observations on the Prophecies of Daniel. p. 14.

(b) Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Ephes. ii. 8.

but was bred up and had his chief abode at Nazareth in Galilee?

Artemon. It is in the ſame way that we know that there were ſuch men as Cicero, and Julius Cæſar, who, lived a little before that period; namely, from the hiſtory and accounts given by perſons of veracity, who lived and converſed with Jeſus, and wrote from their own knowlege concerning him; whoſe writings have been preſerved and faithfully handed down from that time to the preſent.

Euſebes. Do any heathen writers, I pray, make mention of Chriſt, and of the time in which he lived?

Antemon. To mention no others, Tacitus, a roman hiſtorian of rank, and in deſerved eſteem, who lived near the time, after ſpeaking of the wanton burning of Rome by the emperor Nero, and his endeavours to ſcreen himſelf from the infamy of it, by unjuſtly accuſing the chriſtians, and condemning great numbers of them to the moſt cruel ſufferings for it; takes the opportunity, in that part of his hiſtory, to inform his readers, that "theſe chriſtians *(a)* had their name from Chriſt, who was put to death as a malefactor, in the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea." This hiſtorian

(*a*) Auctor nominis ejus CHRISTUS, qui, Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum, ſupplicio affectus erat. Annal. l. xv. c. 44.

hiſtorian ſpeaks in general terms of the crimes of the chriſtians, and particularly of their hoſtile enmity to all mankind. But this language, in the mouth of a heathen idolater, ſuch as he was, meant nothing more than the chriſtians contempt of their falſe Gods, and neglect of their worſhip.

Euſebes. I beg to know, what evidence we have, that this ſame Jeſus of Nazareth was a teacher with authority from God?

Artemon. This was evinced, 1ſt. by the miracles which he wrought, and which he alleged as a proof of his being ſent in that character from God: *Then came the Jews round about him, and ſaid unto him; how long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly. Jeſus anſwered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witneſs of me.* John x. 24, 25. *Nicodemus ſaid unto Jeſus; Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do theſe miracles that thou doſt, except God be with him.* iii. 2.

And 2dly. by the prophecies fulfilled in his perſon: *Had ye believed Moſes, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how ſhall ye believe my words?* v. 46, 47.

Euſebes. But where lies our obligation, to obey this divine teacher?

Artemon. Jeſus continually declared that he came and acted by the authority of God, and that all mankind

mankind were to attend to and obey him. His discourses with the Jews, recorded by the evangelist St. John, particularly abound with his sayings of this kind. Also at the baptism of Jesus, and upon another solemn occasion afterwards, Almighty God, by a voice from heaven proclaimed; "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.* Matt. iii. 17. xvii. 5. And the apostle Peter brings this divine command to hear Jesus home to us, who are of the gentiles, in his second epistle, written to gentile christians, where he says; *We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God, the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory; this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with him in the mount.* 2 Peter. i. 16, 17, 18.

INQUIRY II.

Whether Jesus Christ taught the same God as Moses.

Eusebes. I SHOULD be glad to know if Christ instructed the people of the Jews, to whom he was immediately sent, in the knowlege of the one true God?

Artemon. No: he never set himself expresly to do this: but as they had been taught it by Moses their

their divine lawgiver before him, he contented himself with referring them to him. *(a)*

Eusebes. In what manner then I pray, did Moses teach this important doctrine?

Artemon. The first commandment which God gave to the Israelites by him, is in these terms: (Exod. xx. 2, 3.) *I am the* LORD *thy God—thou shalt have no other Gods before* ME, or, in my presence. Whoever allows himself one moment's impartial reflection, will see, that every other person, but that one person who here speaks, is excluded from being God, and forbidden absolutely to be acknowleged as such: for the pronoun *me*, restricts the sense distinctly and intirely to one single person, as much as when you say; give that to none but *me*, you mean, that it is to be given to yourself, and to no other person. And it is much to be remarked, that our Saviour furnishes a very signal attestation to and confirmation of this doctrine, that there is but one person who is God, and none other besides him;

(a) When our Saviour's apostles preached the gospel to the heathens, worshipers of many false Deities, they always began with teaching them the *Divine Unity* Acts xvii. 2, 24, 31, xiv. 15. With the Jews, the method of our Saviour and his apostles was, to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah; i. e. their great expected prophet, and promised messenger of Jehovah, the most high God, the God of their fathers.

him; by the manner in which he cites Moses for it, and refers to him.

Eusebes. Be pleased to tell me how that was; and what it might be that called Christ out to speak at all upon the subject?

Artemon. We are told that *One of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him; Which is the first commandment of all?* Observe the solemnity of our Saviour's reply to this man, which is in the very words of Moses, Deut. vi. 4, 5. *And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; (a) the* LORD *is our God, the* LORD *alone: And thou shalt love the* LORD *thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.* The answer of the scribe, (with which our Saviour expresses himself greatly satisfied) lays down the doctrine of the *Divine*

(*a*) Le Clerc on Deut. vi, 4. takes notice of the mistake in our english bible, in translating; *The* LORD *our God is one* LORD, instead of *The* LORD *is our God, the* LORD *alone*; and observes that the hebrew construction requires it to be so translated; and morever, that Jehovah (which we, after the greek, translate LORD) being a proper name, it is hardly sense to say, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah, any more than it would be to say, George our king is one George, or for a Philistine to have said, Dagon our God is one Dagon.

Divine Unity in the strongest and most definite language, and shews how strictly it was taken by Christ himself, and the Jews in general at that time, ver. 32. *And the scribe said unto him, of a truth, master, thou hast said well: for there is* ONE GOD; *and there* IS *none other but* HE. *(b)*

Eusebes. As I perceive that our Saviour delivers this doctrine of Moses concerning God, as his own belief, I should be glad to have your thoughts upon this circumstance, with respect to the subject of our inquiry.

Artemon. It immediately and directly follows from it; that in the opinion of Jesus, as of Moses, God is one single person, in the strictest possible sense of the word. And indeed, who can love with the *whole* heart; (as here injoined) who can give their *highest* love to more persons than one?

INQUIRY III.

Whether the God of the Israelites formerly, and of their descendants the Jews now, be the same with the God of the Christians?

Eusebes. I BEG to know if our Saviour, upon any occasion, condemned the Jews in his time for being guilty of polytheism and idolatry in worship-

(b) Dr. Clarke observes, that in this text, Mark xii. 32, most of the ancient MSS. omit the word Θεος, God; and then it stands thus, *Of a truth master, thou*

ping any other than Jehovah, the God of Iſrael, the one living and true God?

Artemon. We never read of his blaming them in the leaſt in this reſpect. What he condemned them for, was their diſobedience to the laws of God, and not receiving himſelf as his meſſenger, their great promiſed prophet, the Meſſiah, the Chriſt; but wilfully ſhutting their eyes againſt the powerful convincing evidence which he gave them of his divine miſſion.

Euſebes. Do we find our Saviour at any time making mention of himſelf having the ſame God with the reſt of the Jewiſh nation?

Artemon. There is a ſtriking inſtance of this in his converſation with the woman of Samaria. Upon her aſking him which was the right worſhip, the Samaritan or the Jewiſh? He replies, (John iv. 22. *Ye* (Samaritans) *worſhip what ye do not know: We* (Jews) *worſhip what we do know: for ſalvation is of the Jews.* In which declaration it is plain that he owns himſelf to be one of the jewiſh people, and a worſhiper of the moſt high God, the Father, in common with them.

Euſebes. Can you aſſign any acknowlegement of this kind made by Chriſt, that is more explicit and particular?

Artemon.

thou haſt well ſaid, (ὅτι) *that He* (*the* LORD, Jehovah, mentioned, ver. 29.) *is One, and that there is none other but He,*

Artemon. Yes: there is something exceedingly remarkable in the message which he sent to his drooping apostles, by Mary Magdalene, soon after he was raised from the dead. For he therein bids her acquaint them, for their encouragement, tha the had the same God and Father with themselves, to whom he was soon to depart; and who would continue his blessing and protection both to them and to himself: *Jesus saith unto her, go to* MY BRETHREN, *and say unto them; I ascend unto* MY FATHER, *and your Father; and to* MY GOD, *and your God.* John xx. 17.

Eusebes. What do you collect from this message of Christ to his apostles, which seems so very extraordinary?

Artemon. These three important consequences result from it:

1. That the God of the Jews is, by the confession of Jesus, the God of the christians: for this was their common God, and Father, acknowleged by himself and his apostles:

2. That Jesus cannot be the most high God, nor in any sense to be acknowleged as such, since he confesses himself to have the same God and Father with the rest of mankind:

3. That it is utterly contradictory, and impossible, that Jesus should be the most high God, that he should be any thing but a creature, however great his powers and excellencies, who owns his

apostles to be his *(a)* brethren, i. e. his fellow-mortals. *The most high, the eternal God, has no brethren: can have none.*

Eusebes. You say that our Saviour Christ, never in his own time, blamed the people of the Jews for falling into the idolatry of other nations; or worshiping any other but the one only true God: Did his apostles ever find fault with their countrymen on this account?

Artemon.

(a) It is worthy of note, that our Saviour, when referring to his highest state of dignity and exaltation, does not disdain to call his virtuous and faithful followers among mankind, his kindred and relations: a circumstance this, which one would hope might in time draw men off from *worshiping him as the supreme God*, whom they are at the same time to consider *as their brother.* It is in that beautiful representation of the day of judgment, where speaking of himself before hand, as who was to preside at that awful tribunal, he says; *And the king shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these* MY BRETHREN, *ye have done unto me,* Matth. xxv. 46. See also Heb. ii. 12, 16, 17, where ver. 16, is wrongly translated, viz. *he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham:* whereas it ought to be *he layeth not hold of,* i. e. he saveth not *angels, but he saveth the seed of Abraham.* St. Paul also calls Christ, *the first born,* or chief *among* MANY BRETHREN. Rom. viii. 29.

Artemon. By no means, far from it: they continually bear testimony, that their countrymen were irreproachably right and exact in this important point; and moreover, that *the God of the Jews was the God of the christians also.* To their rulers, who had forbidden them to teach in the name of Jesus, *Peter, and the other apostles, answered and said; We ought to obey God rather than men. The* GOD OF OUR FATHERS *raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour.* Acts v. 29, 30, 31. See also iii. 13, &c. iv. 24, 27, with many other passages in the book; and in St. Paul's epistles.

Eusebes. Have the Jews, since our Saviour's time, apostatized into idolatry, or fallen away from the worship of Jehovah, the only true God, the Father and creator of all things, whom Jesus and his apostles acknowleged and worshiped in common with them?

Artemon. I cannot answer your question better than in the words of a very respectable author of our own country, which made such an impression upon me in reading, that I believe I can recollect them very exactly. It is no less a man than the Lord Chancellor *King*, who gave this testimony to the Jews in this behalf, at the beginning of the present century. "The body of that people have been so immoveably fixed and confirmed, says he, in the belief of the *Unity of God*, which is every where

where inculcated in the mosaical law, that now throughout their sixteen hundred years captivity and dispersion, they have never quitted or deserted that principle, that *God is one:* as is evident from their thirteen articles of faith, composed by Maimonides, the second whereof is, the *Unity of the blessed God.* Which is there explained to be in such a peculiar and transcendant manner, as that nothing like it can be found. And in their liturgy, according to the use of the *Sepharadim*, or the *Spaniards*, which is read in these parts of the world in their synagogues, in the very first hymn, which is an admiring declaration of the excellencies of the Divine Nature, the repeated chorus is this: *All creatures, both above and below, testify and witness, all of them as one, that the* LORD *is one, and his name one (a).*

Eusebes. Since you have proved the people of the Jews to have been intirely free from error in the object of their religious worship, in the days of our Saviour and of his apostles; and so to have continued from those times to our own: I desire to know if Jews and christians are now agreed concerning the object of religious worship?

Artemon. I am sorry to be obliged to answer, that they are not agreed: For besides Jehovah the only true

(a) *King*'s Critical History of the Apostles' Creed, p. 55, 56.

true God, the Father, whom the jewiſh people then worſhiped, and ſtill worſhip, and whom Jeſus and his apoſtles acknowleged, and taught, and worſhiped, the greater part of chriſtians in all countries, have adopted two other *perſons*, whom they call *God the Son*, and *God the Holy Ghoſt*; both of whom they ſeverally invoke in prayer, and worſhip: which is a great offence, and ſtumbling-block to the Jews, and makes them look upon chriſtians as little better than idolaters: a matter this which moſt aſſuredly deſerves the ſerious conſideration of all chriſtians.

INQUIRY IV.

Whether Jeſus Chriſt taught that he himſelf was God?

Euſebes. We muſt not, however, come too rapidly to a concluſion on this weighty and important ſubject, about which ſo many learned men are of a contrary opinion, and are perſuaded they have much to ſay for it. Perhaps, notwithſtanding the ſtrong proofs againſt the probability of it, which you have produced, our Saviour might teach that he was God, in ſome way incomprehenſible by us, yet nevertheleſs true. I deſire, therefore, to know if Chriſt did

did at any time intimate to his followers, that he was God, or ſtile himſelf ſo.

Artemon. He was ſo far from taking upon himſelf the ſtile and title of God, that he once rebuked a perſon for addreſſing him, though with well-intended reſpect, as if he were any thing approaching to that all perfect majeſty, or had any thing good of himſelf, ſave what came from that Being who made him, and all things: *Jeſus ſaid unto him, Why calleſt thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God.*" Mat. xix. 17.

Euſebes. Was not our Saviour, however, accuſed by the Jews of making himſelf equal with God?

Artemon. Yes, he was accuſed of ſomething of that kind, on two different occaſions: it appears however from the defence which he made both times, that his adverſaries did not charge him with taking upon himſelf to be Jehovah, the living and true God, a thing that never entered into their thoughts, but only with arrogating to himſelf the power and authority of God. For, in the firſt inſtance, where they accuſed him of making himſelf *equal* with God, or, as it ought to be tranſlated, *like* to God, he vindicates himſelf by aſſerting, that he laid claim to no powers but what he had actually received from God: John v. 19. *Then anſwered Jeſus and ſaid unto them, verily, verily, I ſay unto you, the Son can do nothing of himſelf but what he*

ſeeth

ſeeth the Father do, &c. And in the ſecond inſtance, John x. 34, &c. he refutes the calumny by ſaying, that he had aſſumed to himſelf nothing more than became him, *(a)* as the Son of God, i.e. the Meſſiah; and that his miracles proved, that this high character belonged to him: "*If I do not the works of my Father*, (ſuch works as were the effects of a divine power) *believe me not*; *but if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works: that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him*; i. e. that I act by a power and authority from God.

INQUIRY V.

What it was that our Saviour taught concerning himſelf?

Euſebes. Be ſo good as to inform me, in what terms our Saviour uſually ſpeaks of himſelf?

Artemon.

(a) ver. 36. "*Say ye of him whom the Father hath ſanctified, and ſent into the world, thou blaſphemeſt, becauſe I ſaid, I am the Son of God?*" i. e. "Say ye of him whom the Father hath conſecrated, ſet apart and diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of men, by a ſupernatural birth, and by a communication of the ſpirit without meaſure, and by a ſpecial commiſſion and authority to teach his will, *that he blaſphemeth*, becauſe he hath thus ſpoken?" *L'Enfant* in loc.

Artemon. I shall present you with some few examples, by which you may form a judgment what were the sentiments which our Saviour had of himself, and doubtless would have us to entertain of him.

1. *The Son can do nothing of himself, (a) but what he seeth the Father do,* John v. 19, 20. *As the living Father (b) hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so,* &c. *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man is desirous to do his will, he shall know of his doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* ver. 19, 20. *I have not spoken of myself; but my Father who sent me, he gave a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.* xii. 49.

2. *And he that sent me, is with me: the Father hath not left me alone: for I do always, those things that please him.* John viii. 29. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* xv. 10.

3. *To*

(a) He is here speaking of his miraculous works only; that he never wrought any but by an immediate direction and support from God.

(b) This is well paraphrased by Dr. *Clarke:* "As "the Father, who is the original author of life, has "communicated life to me, and will restore it to "me after I have laid it down, by raising me again "from the dead: so, &c."

3. *To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give: but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.* Matt. xx. 23. *It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.* Acts i. 7. *But of that day and hour knoweth no one, no not the angels which are in heaven,* neither the Son, *but the Father,* Mark xiii. 32.——*but my Father* ONLY. Matt. xxiv. 36.

4. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth!——Even so, Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight.* Matt. xi. 25, 26. *And he went a little farther, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt,* xxvi. 39. *And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, (a) I thank thee that Thou hast heard me: and I knew that thou*

(a) Dr. *Clarke* has not given our Saviour's true meaning in his paraphrase. It is thus better done by a learned and useful writer: "Father, I thank Thee, that thou hast granted my request, and enabled me to perform this mighty work. I know indeed, that thou always granteſt my desires, but I have prayed to Thee at present, and now praise Thee for hearing me, that it may confirm the faith of those who are here, and convince them that I act with thy power, and by thy commission."——The gospel-history from the Text of the four Evangelists, with explanatory notes, by Robert Wait, Minister of Galston, 1765.

thou hearest me always: but because of the people that stand by, I spoke, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me. John xi. 41, 42.

Eusebes. What do you infer from these declarations of the blessed Jesus concerning himself?

Artemon. It is most evident, that he cannot be the most high God, who thus declares; 1. That he can do nothing of himself; that he is intirely under the direction and controul of another in all he does or says; from whom he received his very being; 2. that the reason of God's supporting him in so extraordinary a way, and giving him such high marks of his favour, was on account of his sincere obedience and endeavour to please him, and to keep his commandments; 3. *he* who declares himself ignorant of some things, and that others are not in his own disposal, but in that of another; that is, that he is so limited in knowlege and power; 4. *he* who worshiped, gave thanks and prayed to God continually for assistance; *he*, to whom such things belong, cannot be the most high God. But from these and many other similar declarations of Christ, if we will give credit to his own words, we must conclude, that he was a creature of God like ourselves, equally dependant upon him for every thing; and who, for his consummate worth, and perfect virtue and obedience, was raised to that high place and preeminence in the divine favour, which he now worthily enjoys.

INQUIRY

INQUIRY VI.

Whether what Christ thus taught concerning his being a creature, intirely dependant upon God, is only true of him in one sense, that is, according to his human nature, as it is called.

Eusebes. I BEG you to resolve me in one thing, if our Saviour Christ had not *two natures*, so that he was God and man at the same time; and all the depreciating things that he speaks of himself as being a creature, belong to his human nature only?

Artemon. The supposition of Christ having two natures, a divine and human nature, taketh for granted the very thing in question, which ought to be proved, namely, that he is a being so compounded.

It is a supposal that has no countenance whatever in the sacred writings. Our Saviour most assuredly used no reserve or ambiguity in what he said of himself. When he averred that he received life from the Father and creator of all things; that he could do nothing of himself; he meant what he said most sincerely, and would have us so to understand him. When he prayed to God for help and strength, he stood in need (*a*) of what he prayed

 for,

(*a*) *And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, oh that Thou wouldst remove this cup from me! nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.* Luke xxii. 41, 42.

for, and wanted that assistance which was given him.

It is a thing in itself utterly impossible, that a being should be God and man; creator and creature; self-existent, eternal, independant, and limited, dependant, and having begining of existence, at the same time; omniscient and omnipotent, and yet ignorant and weak. These things are not compatible: we should be shocked at their absurdity, if they were not instilled into us before we began to make use of our reason, and if many were not afterwards afraid to make use of it about them; suffering themselves to be dazzled by great names and authorities, and imposed on by high antiquity, which can give no prescription to what is unintelligible and impossible. In short, this doctrine of Christ being possessed of two natures, is the fiction of ingenious men, determined at all events to believe Christ to be a different Being from what he really was, and uniformly declared himself to be; by which fiction of theirs, they elude the plainest declarations of scriptures concerning him, and will prove him to be the most high God, in spite of his own most express and constant language to the contrary. And as there is no reasoning with such persons, they are to be pitied, and considered as being under a debility of mind in this respect, however sensible and rational in others.

INQUIRY

INQUIRY VII.

Of the testimony and sentiment of the three former evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, concerning our Saviour Christ.

Eusebes. I MUST again intreat you, that we may not leave any thing unexamined, and make too hasty a decision upon a point of this magnitude, which involves almost the whole christian world now, and for many ages, past, in the lamentable breach of the first commandment of God, given by Moses, and confirmed by Jesus; in the continued act and practice of idolatry, by acknowleging other persons to be Gods, besides Jehovah, the God of Israel, the one living and true God. But as there are other remaining arguments from the scriptures, by which some would prove Jesus to be the most high God; I would beg you next to take the trouble, in as concise a manner as you can, to acquaint me, what is said of him by those who are certainly best able to give us true information concerning him: I mean the sacred historians of the life of Christ, and his apostles; who conversed with him, and were instructed by him, that they might instruct others: whether they had any secret commission to teach what he judged proper to omit; either that he himself was the most high God, or that there was any other person who was God, but

the Father only. And as the three former evangelists wrote before St. John, and probably without seeing or knowing of each others writings, I should be glad first to know what their testimonies amount to on this head. Tell me then, I pray, what is the general account which they give of our Saviour Christ?

Artemon. The evangelists, Matthew and Luke, give us the pedigree of Jesus, from Abraham and David. Luke derives it from Adam. Both mention his extraordinary birth of Mary, and some instances of singular respect shewn him in his infancy. Luke touches briefly upon his *gradual* improvements in wisdom and virtue, though much above the common rate; of which he relates one instance, when he was no more than twelve years old. After which they both are wholly silent about him 'till the time of his manhood, when he entered upon his public ministry. At this period, Mark takes up the account, and begins *his* history. After which, they all three proceed, each in his own way, to note down the principal facts of our Saviour's public life, somewhat differently; so that you plainly perceive they did not write in concert or copy from each other, as they have all several facts and circumstances of the same fact, not marked by the others; and yet the whole of their narrative, in such harmony and accord with each other in what is substantial and important, as much confirms

firms the general truth of their history, by exhibiting them as so many several independent witnesses of the facts they relate. They all three begin with the baptism of Jesus by John; when he received the *holy spirit* from heaven, or gifts of a divine power and wisdom to fit him for his high office, and to enable him to give full proof of his commission and authority from God. They then relate the *temptation of the devil*, as it is called; which they all agree in dating at this time, and immediately before his entrance on his public ministry; so that however it is to be interpreted, it was something preparatory to it. After this, each gives what he thought a sufficient account of this divine Saviour's doctrine and preaching: of his ardent zeal and unwearied labours to bring men to the knowledge of Divine Truth, and to be saved by it from sin and most lasting misery: the great wisdom and courage on the one hand, and gentleness and kindness on the other, with which he conducted himself in his unacceptable work of reforming mankind; closing their histories with his last sufferings and violent unjust death in the cause of God, and of the truth he had taught from him, together with his speedy restoration to life, by the power of God, in three days, according to his own prediction.

Eusebes. What now, I pray, appear upon the whole to have been the sentiments of these evangelists concerning their master, the holy Jesus, from these principal

principal circumſtances of his life which you have recited from them?

Artemon. They aſſuredly conſidered him, however excellent in virtue, and honoured with high divine powers, to be a creature of God, as well as themſelves; and had not the moſt diſtant thought of his being God, the moſt high God. For they give a very particular relation of his birth, as alſo of his death and burial. But the eternal, ſelf-exiſtent Being cannot be born, or have begining of exiſtence: God cannot die, or ceaſe to exiſt. They alſo deſcribe Jeſus as growing, and making improvement in wiſdom and virtue. But it is moſt derogatory to the infinite all-perfect mind, to ſuppoſe he can be wiſer and better to-day than he was yeſterday. They repreſent him, moreover, as expoſed to temptations, ſo as to be in danger of being drawn aſide by them from the paths of holineſs and integrity. But it would be impious to imagine any thing of this kind incident to the Divine Being.

Euſebes. But does not St. Matthew intimate notwithſtanding, as if Jeſus was in ſome peculiar unknown way, God, when in deſcribing the manner of his birth, he applies to him thoſe words of Iſaiah (vii. 14.) *Behold a virgin ſhall conceive, and ſhall bring forth a ſon, and they ſhall call his name Imanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us?* Matt. i. 23.

Artemon.

Artemon. In whatever way you consider the evangelist as applying this passage to the birth of Christ, it will amount only to this; that at the birth of the child, or by him, some way or other, *God would be with them*, would do something extraordinary, work some great deliverance for his people, confer some singular blessing on them: not that the infant babe would be the most high God, in any sense or manner whatsoever. The way of expression was familiar with the hebrew writers, and runs through the whole bible. *God is with any one*, when he does any thing extraordinary for him, *(a)* or by him. So Nicodemus, on seeing Christ's miracles, tells him, that he was persuaded (John iii. 2.) *that God was with him*, that he had an extraordinary power and commission for him. St. Luke also shews us how such phrases ought to be understood, and *how easily and readily the common people among the Jews understood them, though we through prejudice and inattention make such a mystery of them.* For when our Saviour had raised the widow's son to life, it is said; (Luke vii. 16.) *there came a fear on all: and they*

(a) Acts x. 38. *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.* Here the sacred writer expressly declares, how God was with Jesus of Nazareth; namely, by those extraordinary powers conferred upon him.

they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet has risen up among us; and that God hath visited his people. God visited his people, say they. How *visited* them? Not in person, but *by raising up a great prophet* among them. This explains that language concerning the future times of the Messiah, so frequent in the prophetic writings: viz. *A voice crieth; In the wilderness, prepare ye the way of* JEHOVAH, *make straight in the desart a highway for our God: ——Get thee up upon a high mountain, O daughter, that bringest glad tidings to Sion: Exalt thy voice with strength, O daughter, that bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem. Exalt it; be not afraid: Say to the cities of Judah, behold your God. Behold the Lord* JEHOVAH *shall come.* Isaiah xl. 3, 9, 10. *God,* the Lord Jehovah, *did come* to his people, when Jesus was raised up, of the family of Abraham and seed of David, and came among them, acting by a divine authority, and doing these mighty miracles of raising the dead to life, &c. in proof of it.

Eusebes. But does not St. Matthew, near the close of his history, (xxviii. 19.) teach that there are three persons, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, who are each of them God; when he tells us, that Jesus ordered his apostles, to *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit?* Are not these three put on a level, and made equal to each other?

Artemon.

Artemon. Assuredly, no one could rise up from the reading of St. Matthew's gospel, and imagine that any such doctrine was to be extracted from these words. For in all the foregoing parts of his book, he never speaks of Christ but as their great expected prophet, and the messenger of God, gifted with extraordinary divine powers. Nor does he ever describe the spirit or holy spirit as any thing but a divine power, the power or gift of God. So that unless a man brought along with him a previous persuasion of three persons being each of them God, he could never discover it here, or in any thing else delivered by the evangelist. Moreover, the being baptized into any person, does not bespeak that person to be God, as is well known; for St. Paul makes mention of the Israelites being *baptized into Moses*, 1 Cor. x. 2. Nor does our Saviour's being thus joined together with the Father, imply any the least equality to him, any more than Moses being in like manner joined together with Almighty God, implied that Moses was equal to God; where it is said, (Exod. xiv. 31.) *the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and his servant Moses:* or that king David was the most high God, because it is said, (1 Chron. xxix. 20.) *that the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshiped the LORD and the king.* I would farther observe, that the apostles, who were the best judges of their divine master's intentions, did not think there was

any

any thing ſo important in this form of words in baptiſm; or ſo extraordinary a myſtery therein, as many have made of it. For we never find afterwards that they confined themſelves to the uſe of it; but on the contrary, when they baptized perſons, they baptized them into the name of Jeſus *(a)* only; which indeed comprized the other, being an abridgement of it. For the true meaning of being *baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit*, is the being baptized or initiated into the knowlege or profeſſion of that goſpel or doctrine of eternal ſalvation, which the God and Father of all, revealed to mankind by the miniſtry of his ſon Chriſt Jeſus, and confirmed by the gifts of an extraordinary divine power, communicated to Jeſus and his apoſtles. One wonders that thoſe who would hence deduce that Jeſus is the moſt high God, equal to the Father, do not conſider that in the very ſame inſtant, Jeſus himſelf declares, that his power, great as it was, had been received from another; that is, he had it not of his own. ver. 18. *All power is* GIVEN *unto me.* Add to all this, the utter improbability that this apoſtle and evangeliſt ſhould introduce two perſons, as being each of them God, equal to the moſt high God, two new Gods, the Son and Holy Spirit, ſo intirely

(a) Acts viii. 16. *They were baptized into the name of the Lord Jeſus.* See alſo x. 48. xix. 5. and Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27.

intirely contrary to their jewiſh belief, and firſt commandment of God, delivered by Moſes, and confirmed by Jeſus himſelf, *viz.* that there was but one ſingle perſon, Jehovah, who was God, and Father of all; and this ſtrange doctrine, ſo different from what this ſacred writer had all along maintained, to be thruſt in, at the end of his book, by the by as it were, without any preceding notice, or proof of it. It is plain, and has been ſhewn, that the evangeliſt aſſerts no ſuch doctrine: but it would have been hardly credible, had he aſſerted it in ſuch a way.

INQUIRY VIII.

Of the teſtimony and ſentiment of the apoſtle John concerning our Saviour Chriſt.

Euſebes. You have left nothing farther for me to aſk you concerning the real ſentiments of the three evangeliſts, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, relating to Jeſus Chriſt; who, I ſee, were far from looking upon him to be God, the moſt high God. But as St. John has been held openly and directly to aſſert this, in the very preface to his goſpel; I muſt beg you particularly to favour me with your ſentiments on that head. And I am the more anxious to hear your full diſcuſſion of the matter,

 becauſe

becauſe chriſtian writers inform us, and the book itſelf confirms the tradition, that this evangeliſt wrote after the other three, and after having ſeen their writings, and with a view to ſupply ſome things that had been omitted by them. I beg leave therefore to aſk, if it be Jeſus, as commonly ſuppoſed, whom St. John deſcribes under the title of *The word*, ο λογος, at the entrance of his hiſtory? *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The ſame was in the begining with God. All things were made by him*; and ſo on. John i. 1, 2.

Artemon. I think, and am perſuaded, that we may, without any heſitation, pronounce, that it can, in no ſort or degree, be ſaid of Jeſus Chriſt, that he was in the begining, before any thing was made; or, that he was God and creator of all things. Such language can belong to none but the moſt high God. For there are not two ſupreme Gods and Creators; nor can be. And that the apoſtle ſpeaks not here of Jeſus, but of God only, is moſt evident, if we will but attend to his words, and be guided by them. For he adds in the ſame breath and ſentence, θεος ην ο λογος, *God was the Word*; i. e. that *Word*, of which he had been ſpeaking.

Euſebes. But, how can God be the *Word?* Is it not a moſt ſtrange, unintelligible way of ſpeaking?

Artemon.

Artemon. However it may ſeem to us, there was nothing extraordinary or difficult to be underſtood in it, to the hebrews his countrymen, or to perſons acquainted with the ſtile of the ſacred writings; for whoſe uſe he compoſed his hiſtory of Chriſt. In his other works, we find him ſaying; (1 John 1. 5.) *God is light*; as in him is the moſt unſpotted purity and holineſs: and again (iv. 16.) *God is love*; as in him is the moſt perfect benevolence; and in like ſort here, *God is the Word*, i. e. he may be ſo called, becauſe in him is all wiſdom and power: by the term *Word*, underſtanding the wiſdom or the powerful *(a)* word and command, by which all things were made: and either of theſe two ſenſes, the term, ο λογος, uſed by St. John, properly holds forth to us.

Euſebes. What then do you imagine, Artemon, to have moved the apoſtle to place ſuch an extraordinary introduction before his hiſtory of Chriſt? What was his deſign it?

Artemon. There is nothing in it, Euſebes, ſo very extraordinary; or unſuitable to his uſual ſtile in writing, which abounds much in high figurative expreſſions: in which he appears to have copied after his maſter, Jeſus. And his deſign throughout this

(a) Pſ. xxxiii. 6. *By the word* (τω λογω) *of the* LORD *were the heavens made, and all the hoſt of them by the breath of his mouth.*

preface, very obviouſly, and very proper and befitting the work he was entering upon, is, to teach that all things were made by and proceeded from the moſt perfect Reaſon or Wiſdom, which is God himſelf, and not from any inferior power or agent, which the eaſtern and greek philoſophers maintained, and which ſome of them too ſoon brought into the chriſtian church: and that from this Word or Wiſdom of God, came all the lights and aſſiſtances, which mankind had at different times received by divine meſſages, and Prophets, eſpecially by Jeſus Chriſt, who was ſuperior to them all; and who was *the true light*, by way of excellence, above all others. And in uſing this language, the apoſtle moſt probably had in his eye, and imitated that deſcription of the moſt high God, in *Proverbs* viii. where Wiſdom is introduced as a Divine Perſon, who had been with God *from everlaſting, from the beginning, before the world was made. When he prepared the heavens, I was there. Then was I by him, and I was daily his delight.* All which beautiful imagery is contrived and adopted to teach in a more lively way, that God made all things, and governs them, with the moſt perfect wiſdom.

Euſebes. But when our evangeliſt ſays of this *Word* or Wiſdom, that it *was with God*, and repeats immediately, as it were to impreſs us the more ſtrongly with it; *The ſame was in the begining*

with

with God: Does it not imply, that this *Word* or Wisdom was a real intelligent being or person, who is thus represented as being with God; and not a divine attribute or quality.

Artemon. It no more implies this than the language I have just now mentioned, of Solomon, concerning *Wisdom*; (Prov. viii.) *Then was I by him*, and so on, proves *Wisdom* to have been an intelligent person; another deity. Our apostle, in another place, says; (1 John i. 2) *We shew unto you that eternal life*, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, *and was manifested unto us.* No one here understands, that *eternal life* was a real person, though spoken of in this lively style, as being or living with the Father. Nor should we do it in the other case, if through our heathen prejudices we were not prone to catch at every expression that would favour the notion of a multiplicity of Gods.

Eusebes. Are there any arguments which confirm this interpretation that you have given, and prove that the evangelist was far from intending to assert that Jesus was *the Word*, which is here characterized as the most high God and creator of all things?

Artemon. There are many arguments of holy scripture which shew this in the most convincing manner. For

1. Our evangelist could not set out at first, and stile Jesus the most high God, and within a few

pages of his book afterwards, introduce the ſame Jeſus declaring, as he continually does, that he was himſelf a creature of God, depending upon him, and who received life and every thing from him; and afterwards alſo aſſerting, as I have had occaſion to mention before, that the Father, as diſtinguiſhed from himſelf, and all other beings, was the only true God; and that he himſelf had the ſame God, and Father, in common with the reſt of the human race: whom he calls his brethren. Such contradictions no writer of a ſound underſtanding can fall into.

2. It cannot be imagined that a pious jew, like our apoſtle, ſhould, as I before obſerved to you with reſpect to St. Matthew, bring in a new God, a new, and before unknown creator of the world, in flat contradiction to the firſt and ſecond commandments of their divine law; and in the face of thoſe many declarations of Jehovah by his prophet *(a)*; that *He* only was God, and no other beſides him; *He* only, creator of all things. And this, moreover, to be but once aſſerted, without any proof, in the begining of his book: and never to recur to it afterwards; never again to ſtile Jeſus the *Word*, or call him God; but to ſpeak of him, and deſcribe him as ſpeaking of himſelf, as being nothing of himſelf, but whatever he was, receiving it from God. Such ſuppoſitions are not

(a) See Iſaiah xlii. v. xliv. 24. xlv. 11, 12.

not within the line of credibility, where there is any degree of ſenſe or conſiſtency.

3. It is alſo to be obſerved, that our evangeliſt, St. John, joined with the reſt of the apoſtles, in a prayer to almighty God, in which Jeſus is particularly and expreſsly excluded from being God and the creator, and in a very ſtriking manner contradiſtinguiſhed from that adorable majeſty; from him who is alone ſovereign and ſupreme. It is near the begining of the ſecond treatiſe of St. Luke, and runs thus; "*Sovereign Maſter (a); Thou art* "*the God who haſt made heaven and earth, and the* "*ſea, and all that in them is;—grant unto thy ſer-* "*vants, that with all boldneſs they may ſpeak thy* "*word, by thy ſtretching forth thine hand to heal, and* "*that ſigns and wonders may be done by the name of* "*thy holy (b) ſervant Jeſus.*" Acts iv. 24, 29, 30. St. John,

(*a*) Δεσπότα, *Sovereign Maſter* rather than *Lord:* a name in ſcripture appropriated to God.

(*b*) It hath been ſhewn at large in another place, (ſee "A Diſſertation on praying to Chriſt." p. 89,) that the apoſtles, in this prayer, call our Saviour, God's *holy ſervant,* not *child,* as we tranſlate it. I find alſo Dr. Clarke intimating that the word ſhould be tranſlated *ſervant,* and that name given to Chriſt, not only in this chapter, but alſo Acts iii. 13, and 25. It deſerves notice here, that Almighty God, by the prophet Iſaiah, more than once calls the future Meſſiah,

St. John, and the other apoſtles, who offered this prayer to God, by addreſſing him, *Thou*, as one ſingle perſon, could never think there was any other perſon who was God; or conſider Jeſus, whom in this very prayer they call the *ſervant* of God, as being at the ſame time the moſt high God, *by whom all things were made.* John i. 3.

Euſebes. Can you ſhew it probable by any other argument, that St. John did not in the begining of his goſpel intend to deſcribe Chriſt as being the *Word*, who was God, and creator of all things?

Artemon. There is one proof, which though not directly taken from the ſcriptures, does much confirm the evidence, that the evangeliſt intended no ſuch thing. And this is furniſhed by the *creed*, called the apoſtles'; which, although it was not written by them, is on all hands allowed to be very ancient, eſpecially the former parts it; and therefore may be well reckoned to contain the ſentiments of the apoſtles, and of St. John included amongſt them, concerning the only true God. For it teaches,

Meſſiah, the Chriſt, *his ſervant*; *Behold my ſervant, whom I will uphold*; *my choſen, in whom my ſoul delighteth: I will make my ſpirit reſt upon him.* Iſaiah xliii. 1. Biſhop Lowth's verſion. See alſo lii. 13. liii. 11. Can we wonder that Jews are averſe to chriſtianity, when they ſee chriſtians worſhiping him as the moſt high God, whom their prophets call God's ſervant?

teaches, that there is but one God, who is the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; and that Jesus Christ, his beloved son, who was born of the virgin Mary, suffered the ignominious death of a slave, under Pontius Pilate, the roman governor of Judea; and that there was a *Holy Spirit*, or extraordinary divine power, communicated from God, by which the gospel was preached and established in the world. Whoever composed this creed, most certainly did not believe *(a)* Jesus Christ

(a) The *apostles creed* is indeed, in the strictest sense, an Unitarian creed; and so early an attestation to the doctrine of the *Divine Unity* being received and acknowleged by christians, is of importance. In a well-known *Catechism*, immediately after the repetition of this creed, this question follows; "What dost thou chiefly "learn in these articles of thy belief?" To which the child is made to give this answer; "First, I "learn to believe in God the Father, who made me, "and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, "who hath redeemed me and all mankind, Thirdly, "in God the holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and "all the elect people of God." But can any one truly say, that such a doctrine is contained in this creed; and will not children so taught, believe that there are three Gods, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and go to the reading of the scriptures afterwards with this undue bias on their minds, which may be with difficulty afterwards laid aside; perhaps never?

Christ to be the most high God, and creator of all things: for God cannot suffer or die; which has been observed before, but hardly can be too often repeated.

Eusebes. What does our evangelist mean afterwards, when going on farther to treat of the *Word*, ο λογος, which, according to your interpretation, is God himself, he says, "*The Word was made flesh*; or, as it might more justly be rendered in english, *The Word became man*, a mortal man, *and dwelt among us*, and so on. Can this be said of God? Is it possible for him to become a man?

Artemon. Unquestionably that is a thing impossible, and far from the intention of the apostle. Nevertheless his words will be found to have a very just, proper, and easy meaning, if we attend to the design of St. John in them. For here he comes to the point, for the sake of which he had been giving such an animated and magnificent description of the supreme Being; namely, that he might introduce the Character of Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, who was to be the subject of his book, with the greater solemnity in this 14th verse. "Now, says he, this *Word*, or *Wisdom* of God, which, in a very just and well known sense, is God himself; by which he first made all things, animate and inanimate, men and angels; and from which proceeded all his former extraordinary communications of light and knowlege to mankind; was at last imparted in the fullest manner to Jesus, and resided in

in him: by which all men might plainly discover, and we his apostles had undeniable evidence, that he was the Messiah, the Christ, whom all were to hearken to and obey, as God himself: *The Word*, says he, (Wisdom) *became man, and dwelt among us* (in the man Christ Jesus); *and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten* (or most beloved) *of the Father.*

Eusebes. Can you illustrate this interpretation which you have given of the words of St. John, by any similar language of Christ or the other apostles?

Artemon. Jesus saith unto him; have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the father: and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father? Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: and the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. John xiv. 9. In this passage, *the Father*, whom Christ speaks of as dwelling in him, corresponds exactly with the *Word*, or *Wisdom* becoming man, and *dwelling* in Christ. And in both places, the expressions denote, in the bold figurative stile of the scriptures, the influence of the Divine Wisdom and Power, by which Jesus acted.

Exactly of the same cast and import is that language of the apostle Paul, Colos. ii. 8, 9. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,*

ceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (rather *of the divine power*) *bodily.* To understand this, you are to take along with you, that in the apostolic age, it pleased God to bestow various gifts of extraordinary knowlege, of ability to teach others, of speaking in the language of other nations, &c. 1 Cor. xii. xiii. xiv. promiscuously on believers, for the support of the christian church in its infancy. With a view to this, St. Paul, in another place, prays for the christians at Ephesus, that they *might be filled with all the fulness of God.* (Eph. iii. 19.) i. e. might abound in all those extraordinary gifts from God, which were needful for them. Now here he says, that these gifts of a Divine Wisdom and Power were bestowed on Christ without measure *(a)*, for in him dwelt all the fulness of the Divine Power; which is really nothing else but saying, in other words, that the Divine Word, or Wisdom became man, and dwelt in Christ Jesus. With just cause therefore does the apostle exhort to adhere to Christ, and not follow that false philosophy, and worldly accommodating wisdom, with which some were already beginning to corrupt the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, and in which they unhappily

(a) He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. John iii. 34.

happily ſucceeded after the apoſtles were gone off the ſtage.

Euſebes. It has been maintained by many perſons, that in this goſpel of St. John, Chriſt is expreſsly declared to be God, in that narrative which the evangeliſt gives of his condeſcenſion to his incredulous diſciple Thomas, by affording him ſenſible proof of the reality of his being raiſed to life; when convinced of his being really alive, from the dead, (John xx. 28.) *he anſwered and ſaid unto him; My Lord, and my God.*" I beg to know how is this to be underſtood, if Jeſus be not God?

Artemon. But that the blindneſs of prejudice, Euſebes, knows no bounds, one might wonder how it could enter into the minds of ſo many learned and good men in all ages, that this diſciple of Chriſt, who a little before had given up his maſter Jeſus as abſolutely dead; and could not be prevailed upon by evidence that was ſatisfactory to others, to believe but that he was really dead: that this man, with ſuch ſentiments, ſhould inſtantly addreſs Jeſus as the moſt high God, whom till that moment he had ſuppoſed without life, merely on receiving ſenſible proof of his having been under ſuch an error concerning him. Chriſt's being brought to life again could be a proof of nothing elſe but of the favour and goodneſs of God in reſtoring it to him: not a proof, that he was God, the moſt high God. And the emotions it might naturally raiſe in

Thomas's breast, would be expressive of his admiration and thanksgiving to the heavenly Father, which made him break out into that exclamation, "*My Lord, and my God.*" This may be considered as an imperfect ejaculation or prayer to God; and had he uttered it at full length, he might have said, "O my Lord, and my God, I thank thee for this thine unexpected benignity, in raising my dead master Jesus to life again." Or, taking the words, as some do, in the nominative case, the sense may be thus supplied, "My Lord and my God hath done this great thing." But if any, still, notwithstanding, will persist in believing that Thomas here calls Christ, God, they should take along with them, that Christ, not long before, had told his disciples in plain words, that he had the same God and Father with themselves: so that he can only be God in such a sense as a creature can be so called. In short, no proof can be drawn from this speech of Thomas's, either that Jesus was the most high God, or that Thomas believed him so to be.

DIALOGUE IX.

Of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ, as it may be collected from St. Luke's second volume, called The Acts.

Eusebes. You have convinced me that the evangelist St. John intirely agrees with the three former evangelists, in never teaching or delivering any thing

thing concerning the holy Jesus, which implied that he was the most high God. But we shall not complete the evidence which one of them, St. Luke, gives on this subject, unless we take in the second volume of his gospel-history, called, *The Acts.* And as his design in writing this, was, to shew how the gospel was first proposed and preached to jews and heathens by the apostles, it must be curious and important to know what they say of their divine Master; how they exhibit him to the world. But as this same historian has recorded several appearances of Christ after his resurrection, I should be obliged to you first to acquaint me if any thing presented itself at such times, whence it might be concluded, that Christ was the most high God?

Artemon. There is certainly nothing like this, in the account which St. Luke gives of what passed at our Saviour's taking his final leave of his disciples: but it must have had quite the contrary effect upon every one present, and upon all that now pay any attention to it. For, in what their divine Master says to them at that time, he very naturally informs them, that his power and knowlege were limited; and that the direction and government of the world was not his province, but belonged to the heavenly Father alone. "*When they* (his disciples) *were come together, they asked of him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, it is not for you to know the*

times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Acts i. 7.

Eusebes. Much has been said and written concerning the heavenly vision which Stephen was favoured with a little before his death, and the request which he at that time preferred to Christ: But I beg to know if we can thereby learn what were the sentiments of that holy man, and first martyr for the gospel, concerning our Lord.

Artemon. Whatever be determined concerning the address, which he on that occasion offered to Christ, we may be assured that Stephen did not believe him to be above the condition of a creature: for he speaks of him as being the *Son of man*, in that state of exaltation and honour in which he beheld him: "*Lo, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.*" Acts vii. 56.

Eusebes. What information did Christ give to Paul concerning his own true character, when he first made himself known to him from heaven, with a view to make him his apostle, and the chief teacher of the heathen world? Does he acquaint him, that he himself was God, and to be acknowleged as such?

Artemon. No; very far from it. In that heavenly state of glory, the Lord Jesus owns himself to be the man that once had for so long time his abode in the mean town of Nazareth in Galilee. For thus

thus does our apostle himself relate what then passed: "*I fell upon the ground, and heard a voice, saying unto me; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me,* I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH, *whom thou persecutest.*" Acts xii. 7, 8.

Eusebes. In what manner did the apostles of Christ speak of him, in their first preaching of the gospel to the world, after his resurrection?

Artemon. The words of the apostle Peter, in his first sermon to his countrymen, are very remarkable, and deserve the attention of all christians. They are these; Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man, (a) authorized among you by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him ye have taken, being delivered up* (to you) *by the determinate counsel and foreknowlege of God, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.*

Eusebes. What appear hence to be the apostle Peter's sentiments concerning his divine master, and which he was desirous the audience should carry away with them from his discourse?

Artemon. Jesus of Nazareth, being here evidently contradistinguished from the God and governor of the world, as one of the human race most

(a) αποδεδειγμενον) not *approved*, but authorized, *demonstrated* to be the Christ, by miracles, &c.

highly favoured of God; this must have been Peter's persuasion concerning him, and what he was studious to inculcate upon his hearers. For he evidently speaks of him, as a human being, ανθρωπον *a man*, who died as all others do, though by a violent and unjust death; but God, he says, (ver. 24 to 33) vindicated his innocence, and divine mission, by restoring him soon to life, according to the predictions that had been given before concerning him. And he farther informs them, that the great miracles they had seen wrought by Jesus among them, were not done by any powers of his own, but by a power from God, who thus gave testimony to him. After which he concludes, with observing to them, that the dignified titles of *the Christ*, and *the Lord*, i. e. of the great prophet, teacher, and lawgiver of his church and people, of all that did or should believe in him; that these honours were bestowed upon him by Almighty God: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know, assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both* LORD *and* CHRIST. Acts ii. 36.

The very same conclusions concerning our Saviour, who, and what he was, are to be drawn from the manner in which Peter afterwards, by divine appointment, taught the knowlege of Christ and of his gospel to Cornelius, a roman military officer, stationed in Judea, a person of eminent piety and virtue. The account of it is contained in *Acts* x. ver. 34 to 44; and you will do well to consult

consult it. For it is no less remarkable than the extract which I just now gave you from that apostle's first sermon: and both of them, without all doubt, hold forth that specific character of the blessed Jesus, by which the apostle was desirous to have him known and distinguished all over the world.

Not unlike also is St. Paul's first sermon at Antioch, Acts xiii. 16, 40. to a mixed audience of jews and pious heathens: only there is one particular circumstance therein to be remarked, viz. that he begins with informing the heathens among them, (ver. 17.) that it was the *God of the people of Israel*, (the only true God and creator of all things) *who had raised up unto Israel, of the family of David their former king, that Saviour Jesus*, in whose name he spake to them.

Eusebes. You have given several instances what it was that the jews and pious heathens, who *already* believed in God, were taught concerning Jesus Christ, by those who first preached the gospel by authority from God to them; I should be glad to be informed in what manner they address themselves to teach and convert the idolatrous heathens?

Artemon. We have a remarkable example of this in St. Paul's celebrated speech at Athens, when summoned to declare his doctrine before the judges of the court of Areopagus.

Eusebes. What is the method there taken by the apostle to bring them to the knowlege of the gospel?

Artemon.

Artemon. Paul informs them that there was but one God, the maker, governor, and preſerver of all things, ever preſent to his creatures, who was to be worſhiped in purity of heart, who inſpected the actions of men, and would call them to ſtrict account for them hereafter, by that perſon whom he had appointed to teach them his will, of which he had given the fulleſt aſſurance to all that would attend to it. "*God, that made the world and all things therein: he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands,* &c. *The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: becauſe he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Acts xviii. 24. &c.

Euſebes. Why is it, do you imagine, that the apoſtle mentions only this ſingle circumſtance to theſe men concerning our Saviour, that he was appointed of God to be the future judge of men?

Artemon. It is probable that St. Luke ſelected this for brevity ſake, becauſe it was that which St. Paul principally dwelt upon, being what was moſt likely to awaken and alarm the minds of theſe dark and profligate idolaters, as were the greateſt part of thoſe to whom he ſpoke; although it is to be preſumed that he gave them other information more at large concerning Chriſt and his doctrine.

Euſebes.

Eusebes. According to this account, which St. Luke gives of it, what impression was the apostle's discourse calculated to leave upon the minds of the Athenians, concerning Jesus Christ? Would they take St. Paul to be a setter forth of strange gods, in their own way, as some of them, according to their idolatrous notions and prejudices, supposed him to be, before he began to speak; and that Jesus was some new God, added to those they already had, and one whom they had never heard of before?

Artemon. By no means. Those amongst them who paid any serious attention to what was uttered by the apostle, would depart persuaded, that in Paul's account there was but one God, the creator of the world; and that Jesus was a man, ανηρ, who was God's messenger, and by him designed and qualified for a high and most important office in the future world, and that therefore it was of great concernment for them to be acquainted with the message and doctrine which he delivered from God.

Eusebes. But does not St. Paul, when taking leave of the elders of the church of Ephesus, call Christ, God; where he says, Acts xx. 28. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the holy spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of* GOD, *which he hath purchased with his own blood?*

Artemon. The best and most antient manuscript copies of the New Testament, have not here, the church

church OF GOD, but the church OF THE LORD, i. e. of Jesus; and so the most ancient fathers cite it, and so without all doubt it ought to be read. It is one of those astonishing and at the same time most humbling considerations, that persons of large and improved understanding in other respects, should ever entertain the degrading thought, that the most high God and creator of all things, could, in any sort or degree, or by any connection or union whatever, shed blood and die.

INQUIRY X.

Of the doctrine of the apostle Paul, concerning God and Christ.

Eusebes. I HAVE reaped so much benefit, Artemon, from your attention to my inquiries and doubts on these interesting subjects, that I must beg you to indulge me with it a little longer. St. Paul, in the general turn of his writings, always speaks of God as one single person, in such a way as no one can mistake him; and in some places he particularly asserts the *Divine Unity* in the strongest terms, and seems an utter stranger to what is called the *Trinity*, or three persons all together making up one God. For he says, 1. Cor. v. *To us*, (christians) *there is but One God, the Father.* And Eph. iv. 6. *There is but One God, and Father of all, who is above all*, &c. If therefore there be any meaning

meaning in words, I muſt conclude that the apoſtle believed that there was no other perſon who was God, but the Father. And yet there are ſeveral paſſages in his epiſtles, in which he appears to ſpeak of Jeſus Chriſt as being the moſt high God, and creator of all things. For example, in his epiſtle to the Romans, (ix. 5.) he ſays of Chriſt, that he *is over all, God, bleſſed for ever.* If Chriſt be the God over all, bleſſed for ever, are there not then *two* Gods, contrary to our apoſtle's repeated aſſertion, that there is but *one* God, the Father? Surely he could not ſo flatly contradict himſelf, and ſay, that Chriſt was another God, when he had maintained that there was but one God, the Father? I ſhould be glad to know where the miſtake lies in this matter; for ſome miſtake I am ſure there muſt be.

Artemon. If men had not been prepoſſeſſed with the notion of Chriſt being the moſt high God, they could never have applied theſe words of the apoſtle to him. If you turn to the place, Rom. ix. 5. you will ſee that he is enumerating and extolling the religious advantages, and privileges of the jewiſh people, and cloſes the whole with ſaying, *Of whom, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came*; i. e. that even Chriſt himſelf by his deſcent, was a man of the jewiſh nation. Now can any one imagine, that St. Paul, after having ſaid this, ſhould go to add, that this ſame perſon of their kindred and nation, an Iſraelite

born,

born, was the most high God, blessed for ever: a thing that must have shocked them, and turned them against every thing else that he could offer, as they were unmoveable and rooted in this, that there was no other God besides Jehovah, the God of their Fathers? No: an unprejudiced reader would see that after the words, *Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, should be put a full stop. And then to follow, in a sentence by itself, *God, who is over all, be blessed for ever.* This, as the learned know, is a proper construction of the apostle's words, and it is very agreeable to his manner of writing, to throw in such a devout ejaculation, and then proceed with his subject *(a)*.

Eusebes. But does not St. Paul assert, that there is another God, equal to the Father, when he says, (Philip. ii. 6.) that *Christ Jesus thought it no robbery to be equal with God?*

Artemon. English readers are much imposed *(b)* upon by such a translation of the apostle's words. The learned

(a) Some may approve the very probable reading of the apostle's words, offered to the world by Dr. Whitby, and others after him, viz. *whose* or *(of whom) are the Fathers; and from whom is Christ according to the flesh; whose* or *(of whom) is the God over all, blessed for ever.* Whitby's Last Thoughts, p. 80.

(b) The following hymn, which goes upon the idea of there being two equal Gods, and one of them a man,

learned know that they mean no ſuch thing: that inſtead of, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; it ſhould be tranſlated, he did not eagerly covet to be like to God, to appear in the likeneſs of God; i. e. was not ambitious, or fond of exerting thoſe divine powers which had been beſtowed upon him: on account of which he is juſt before ſaid to have been *in the form* (i. e. likeneſs) *of God*; i. e. to have ſuch an outward reſemblance of him as thoſe divine powers gave him. So that our apoſtle does indeed aſſert that our Saviour was poſſeſſed of high divine powers in which he reſembled the moſt high God: but at the ſame time, he goes on to ſay, that Chriſt was ſo far from being himſelf

a man, ſhews one of the unhappy conſequences of authorizing ſuch a wrong tranſlation and perverſion of the apoſtle's words.

——" Yet there is One of human frame,
" Jeſus, array'd in fleſh and blood,
" *Thinks it no robbery to claim*
" *A full equality* with God.
" Their glory ſhines with equal beams;
" Their eſſence is for ever one,
" Tho' they are known by different names,
" The Father-God, and God the Son.
" Then let the name of Chriſt our King,
" With equal honours be ador'd."

Watts. Hymn li. book 2.

himself God, or *(b)* equal to him; that he was even dependent upon God for these divine powers, as well as for every thing else that he possessed, which

(b) It is a paraphrase by no means warranted by the apostle's language, which bishop Hurd, in his sermons, lately published, vol. ii. p. 164, has given of those words of our english translation, *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*; i. e. "Jesus, Christ, "(says his lordship) was in no haste to seize upon, "and assert his right of equality with God." For it is a circumstance well known to the learned, that the word ισος, which his lordship would have to convey the idea of equality here, does frequently signify a resemblance, a likeness only; and the propriety of giving that sense to it in this place, is confirmed by this, that it is a word that admits of degrees of comparison, ισοτερος, ισοτατος, which cannot be asserted of things equal, that they are more or less equal. See *Whitby* in loc. and *Emyln*, vol. i. p. 92. note. St. Paul therefore gives no countenance whatever to such an interpretation of his words. Moreover, his lordship surely did not sufficiently attend to the consequences of maintaining that Christ *claimed a right of equality with God.* For "the asserting him to be equal to God (to use the words of an able commentator) must of necessity carry in it an assertion of a plurality of Gods. If there be a God, and another who is equal to him in nature, perfections, and dominion, the latter must be as truly a God, in the highest and most absolute sense

as

which were God's *gracious gift* to him. *Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and* GRACIOUSLY BESTOWED upon him [ἐχαρίσατο] *a name which is above every name; that, in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.* Philip. ii. 9, 10, 11.

Eusebes. But how shall I get over that other passage of St. Paul, without allowing that he looked upon Christ as God; where he maintains that all things were created by him; (Colos. i. 16.) *For by him,* (says he) *were all things created that are in*

 heaven,

as the former; and when men have said all they can, *a God and a God are as certainly two Gods, as a man and a man are two men.* Nor can this be evaded, by pretending that they are not two Gods, because they are one and the same Being, and so one and the same God; for the inspired writers are utter strangers to such assertions, that a Being is equal to itself." I would farther add; should not those persons who thus give to Almighty God *an equal,* and *one* who, in this very passage, is said to have suffered death, in obedience to God; should not they consider those awful demands made of old to the idolatrous Israelites? "*To whom then will ye liken me? or shall I be equal, saith the holy One? To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?*" Isaiah xl. 25. xlvi. 5.

heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him.

Artemon. You may be assured, that whatever meaning is to be put upon these words, St. Paul had no design in them of asserting that Christ was God; because in the verse immediately before he stiles him, *the image of the invisible God:* i. e. he declares him not to be the invisible God, but a resemblance of him, one of the most dignified of his creatures, who had the honour to be made most like unto him. For whatever is not God, must be a creature. There is nothing between.

Moreover it is utterly impossible that our apostle should here ascribe the creation of the world to Christ, for the two following reasons; first; because no pious jew could believe there were two creators; but that it was one single person, Jehovah, who was the sole creator of all things. For this is an idea that runs through the whole bible, whilst the doctrine is thus most expresly laid down on particular occasions: "*O Lord God of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims! Thou art God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth.* Is. xxxvii. 16. *Thus saith the LORD, the holy one of Israel, and his Maker; I have made the earth and created*

created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens." Is. xlv. 11, 12, &c.

Secondly; St. Paul, in his sermon at Athens, tells them (Acts xvii.) that "*God, who made the world, and all things therein:* He, that single person, and no other, had appointed the man, Christ Jesus, to be the judge of mankind under himself, at some future day." It is impossible that any thing should be more distinguished and different from God, the maker of the world, than Christ is here marked to be.

Eusebes. You have satisfied me, that St. Paul never believed, and therefore could never intend to say, *(a)* that Christ was the creator of the world. But as he here says, that *by him all things were*

(a) It may be thought that there is a text omitted by Eusebes, that overturns all this reasoning, and shews, that, our apostle, whatever self-contradiction there might be in it, actually asserted Jesus Christ to be the creator of all things. It is in *Ephesians* iii. 9. where he treats of *the mystery, which from the begining of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ.* But it is to be observed, that the words *by Jesus Christ,* are wanting in the best manuscripts, and ancient versions of the N. T. neither are they found in Tertullian, Jerom, Ambrose, &c. and are rejected by Mill, Bengelius, and Westein; and therefore should not be put in our Bibles, as part of St. Paul's writings.

created, &c. I desire to know what it is that I am to understand by the words he here uses?

Artemon. You are to observe, that St. Paul is writing to a church or congregation of christians, consisting of jews in part, but principally of heathen idolaters, in whom a mighty change had been wrought by their having been brought to the knowlege of the gospel; which our apostle expresses after his manner in strong figurative language, viz. ver. 13. *that God had delivered them from the power of darkness, and had translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son*; i. e. brought them out of a state of ignorance and depravity to the knowledge of the gospel of Christ; and that ver. 14. *in him they had redemption* (or deliverance) *through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:* i. e. they had an assurance of the divine pardon and acceptance for ever (for that is the full meaning of this gospel-phrase, *the forgiveness of sins*,) *by the blood of Christ*, i. e. by his death, by which he confirmed the truth of the doctrine he taught, concerning the divine mercy and benignity. After this, ver. 15. he goes on to raise and exalt their ideas of Christ; calling him, *the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: the image of the invisible God*, because the wisdom, power, and goodness of God were manifested by him, and seen in him: *the first-born*, the chief, *of every creature*, as the first-born is the chief or head of the family; *of every creature*, i. e. of all mankind, jews and gentiles,

tiles, now united together as one people, and become new creatures or a *(a)* new creation. After which, our apostle's imagination catching flame, as it were, at the idea of the christian world being a new moral and spiritual creation, he goes on after his wonted fine rhetorical manner, to amplify and recommend the character of Christ, as the author of this new creation, as if every being in the universe took part in it, and was affected by it; for *by him*, proceeds the apostle, *were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones*, &c.

Eusebes. Have you any precedent or example to produce from any other part of the scriptures, for speaking of the new establishment of things by Jesus Christ, the reformation of mankind by his gospel, in such a magnificent stile, as if heaven and earth were changed and created anew by it?

Artemon. Yes: there is an example so much to the point, in the book of the prophet Isaiah, that it is not unlikely but our apostle might borrow his language from him. For that lofty animated prophet, treating beforehand of the happy effects of the gospel, introduces the Almighty Being declaring; "*Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth*;

(a) In another place, St. Paul stiles christians new creatures; *If any man be in Christ*, (i. e. a christian) *he is a new creature. Old things are past away*; behold ALL THINGS ARE BECOME NEW. 2 Cor. v. 17.

earth; and the former ones shall not be remembered, neither shall they be brought to mind any more. But ye shall rejoice and exult in the age to come, which I create (a)." Is. lxv. 17, 18.

Eusebes. There is another passage, at the entrance of the epistle to the Hebrews, in which St. Paul speaks of *the worlds being made by Christ.* I am thoroughly satisfied from the arguments you have alleged, that the apostle did not believe, and therefore did never intend to call Christ, the creator of the world: but I shall be glad to know how you explain his meaning in this place, where he says; *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his* (viz. God's) *power*, &c. Heb. i. 1, 2, 3.

Artemon. I hope that now, in no long time, all christians will come to see, as you do, that there is but one only true God, and creator of all things; and that Jesus Christ, and all other beings depend upon him for all things, and are such only to us as he makes them to be. In this passage of St. Paul, (Heb. i. 1, 2.) of which you are desirous to have a solution,

(a) See Bp. Lowth's most valuable translation; which I have all along cited.

ſolution, you are to know, that our engliſh tranſlation does not give the proper meaning of the apoſtle's words, which ſhould be rendered, *for whom he made the ages*, and not, *by whom he made the worlds*. For δι ȣ, *for* whom, is equally agreeable to the original greek. And the word αιωνας, *eons*, which we tranſlate *worlds*, properly ſignifies *ages*, or fixed periods of time, in which certain things are done. In reference to which, the time, or times of the law, or of God's diſpenſation to the Iſraelites under Moſes, is peculiarly called *the age*, αιων, *eon*; or *ages*, αιωνες, *eons*, by our Saviour and the writers *(a)* of the New Teſtament. Thus at taking his final leave of his diſciples, (Matt. xxviii. 20.) *Jeſus ſaid*; not, *lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the* WORLD, as in our common tranſlation; but, *lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the* AGE, τȣ αιωνος, of the *eon*; i. e. of the jewiſh age; as Biſhop Pearce well renders and paraphraſes

(a) See Locke on 1 Cor. ii. 7. Biſhop Pearce well tranſlates Matt. xxiv. 3. not, *the end of the* WORLD, but *the end of the* AGE, i. e. "of the age, during "which the jewiſh church and ſtate was to laſt." And Joh. ix. 32. not *ſince the world began*; but εκ τȣ αιωνος, from the *eon*, *from the age*; i. e. from the begining of the time that the law of Moſes has ſubſiſted, there are no records of any one thus miraculouſly opening the eyes of any one that was born blind. See alſo that valuable commentator, on Acts iii. 21.

paraphrases it. And St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 11. speaking of the Almighty's former visitations of the Israelites for their wickedness, says; *Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and were written for our admonition:* not, *upon whom the ends of the* WORLD *are come*, as we now translate it; for St. Paul had no such thing in his thoughts; but, *upon whom the ends of the* AGES *are come*, των αιωνων, of the *eons*; the ends of the times of the law; i. e. who live under the gospel dispensation. Hence we may conclude, that it was at that time well understood, and a familiar way of speaking with the jews, to call the time of the Mosaic dispensation, *the age*, or *ages*; and most probably was borrowed, as Mr. Locke observes, from the circumstance of their counting by ages, jubilees, periods of fifty years. In agreement with this stile of speech, and much in confirmation of the construction here put upon the apostle's words, Almighty God, by the prophet Isaiah, calls the future times of the Messiah, (as just now cited by me) *the age to come, which I create*, Isa. lxv. 18. And in like manner, by the same prophet, Christ is foretold to be (ix. 6.) *the Father of (a) the age to come*, i. e. the person who was

(a) Surely it is high time to correct that known false reading, and most glaring self-contradiction in our english bibles, in this famous prophecy of Isaiah ix. 6. In which, Christ, who is spoken of expressly in

was to begin that future age; or, in our apostle's words, he, for whom God made or created the ages; with respect to whom he disposed or constituted his several extraordinary dispensations to mankind, and their different periods.

Eusebes.

in the very place, *as a child to be born* at some future time, is nevertheless stiled *the everlasting Father*, instead of *the Father of the age to come*. It is not sufficient that learned men know this perversion of the sacred text. It should be made plain and evident to all; as we find ignorant christians of all ranks, the highest as well as the lowest, continually misled by it to dark and debasing notions of the eternal unchangeable God. Is it to be wondered that many reject a revelation which is supposed to authorize such descriptions of the Deity as the following?

"*This Infant is the mighty God,*
"*Come to be suckl'd and ador'd;*
"*Th' Eternal Father, Prince of Peace,*
"*The Son of David, and his Lord,*"

Watts, Hymn xiii. Book 1.

How much is it to be regretted, that this worthy author did not revise and purge his hymns before his death; if he did intend it, as some say he did!

N. B. From the third appendix to the life of Dr. Watts by Dr. Johnson, with notes by Samuel Palmer, 1791. it appears, that Dr. Watts was sensible that his hymns needed amendment in some important points; but was withheld by weak and unworthy fears from undertaking the work.

Eusebes. But does not our apostle, soon after, in this epistle to the hebrews, cite a passage from the scriptures of the Old Testament, in which Christ is expresly stiled God; where we read thus, *unto the Son he saith; thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* Heb. i. 8.

Artemon. It is well known, Eusebes, to the learned, that this passage, which is taken from Psalm xlv. 6. may with equal propriety, be translated; *God is thy throne for ever and ever.* And the lxx. greek translation rather favours this construction. To which I would add, that as the person here spoken of, is, in the next verse, declared to be honoured and exalted for his eminent virtue and love of righteousness by God, *his* God, to whom he owed every thing, it is more natural and fitting to understand the words in this sense, which they will justly and properly bear; and not to consider them as addressed to Christ as a God; because it is not the stile of the scriptures so to address any being but the only true God.

INQUIRY XI.

Of the doctrine of the apostles, James, and Peter, concerning God and Christ.

Eusebes. Is there any thing in the other writings of the apostles, that can induce us to imagine that they supposed their great master, Jesus, to be the most

most high God; or that there was any other God, but the Father only?

Artemon. In the epistles of James, and Peter, there is certainly nothing of the kind to be found *(a)*

For

(a) I was much surprised to observe bishop Hurd, in his newly published discourses, citing the apostle Peter for holding forth the doctrine of *Three Divine Persons, who are ineffably one God*, and commending him for *accurately distinguishing the respective offices* of these Three Divine Persons: because the authority of men of his character and rank in the church of which he is a member, is apt to weigh much more than it ought to do with many, who will not judge for themselves. It does not, however, look well in persons who are advancing things *strange to natural reason*, as his lordship terms this doctrine, to endeavour to depreciate that natural light, which comes from God, as much as any supernatural one. But it is more blameable when holy scripture is wrongly and carelessly quoted for such a purpose, as is done by the bishop on this occasion. For he should have known, that when St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 14. *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God*, our english version is wrong; and it ought to have been rendered *the sensual man*, as the same word, ψυχικος, is translated, James iii. 17. And also when our Saviour tells his apostles, John xiv. 17, *that the world cannot receive the spirit of truth*, &c. it was easy to see that he means only the corrupt mass of mankind.

In

For in James i. 27. iii. 9. it is plainly and expresly intimated that there is no God but the Father: *Pure religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this*, &c. And *Therewith bless we God, even the Father.* And it is asserted, ii. 19. that *there is* only *one God:* But if Jesus Christ were God, there would be *two* Gods. And 1 Peter i. 3. God is called the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; and

In both cases are to be understood, not as the bishop supposes, those who make use of their natural reason, but those who neglected to use it. "On this assurance "then," says his lordship, (but in which he is wholly unsupported by the authority on which it is built,) "we may *reasonably* believe what by *reason* we can-"not understand. And the substance of what we "are to believe on this whole subject, is contained in "a single text of St. Peter, where *the Three Divine* "*Persons, yet ineffably one God, the Trinity in Unity,* "*whom we adore, and their respective offices, are ac-*"*curately distinguished.* For in the opening of his "first epistle, he pronounces the christians, to whom "he writes, *elect*, that is, entitled to salvation, *ac-*"*cording to the foreknowlege and predetermination of* "*God the Father, through the sanctification of the* "*spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of* "*Jesus Christ.*" Bishop Hurd's sermons, vol. ii. 311, 312, 313. It would be difficult for any one to find out *three persons, who are one God,* in these words of the apostle, 1 Pet. i. 2. unless he came prepared and

and ver. 21. Christ is expressly contradistinguished from God, by the attributes of a dependant mortal creature being given to him, in that he died, and

and resolved to put such a construction upon them. For there is no other person mentioned as God, but the Father: and whether by *the sanctification of the spirit* in consequence of the election of those christians to whom he writes, be understood their being happily distinguished and separated from the rest of the world, by embracing the doctrine which was confirmed by the extraordinary gifts of the spirit of God; or, the salutary effects wrought in their hearts and lives by the gospel, which was dictated by the same spirit; either way, we have no new divine person named, that can be called God; nothing but the power of God. And if *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* be spoken in allusion to Exod. xxiv. 7, 8, and applied to the blessings of the christian covenant, the pardon of sin unto eternal life by the gospel, which Jesus Christ sealed by the shedding of his blood, or confirmed by dying in attestation of it: be it in this, or in any other sense that the words are to be understood, still we have no other Divine Person that can either be called God, or a person or part of the one God. We may not scruple farther to pronounce, that the apostle Peter is much injured by this misrepresentation of his sentiments concerning God and Christ. For upon one occasion we find this fervent apostle receiving high commendations from his Divine master,

had his life reſtored to him after death. But God cannot die, or be reſtored to life. The expreſſions are very ſtrong, and intended to mark that every thing, even under the chriſtian diſpenſation, comes from God, and is to be acknowleged as ſuch: "*By Chriſt*, ſays he, *ye do believe*, or are brought to believe, *in God, who raiſed him from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.* To make an end of citations: the genuine ſentiments of this apoſtle, that there is but one God, who is to be honoured and acknowleged by chriſtians, and that Jeſus Chriſt is not God, but his miniſter and meſſenger to mankind; fully appear by that doxology at the concluſion of this epiſtle, viz. *The God of all favour, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Chriſt Jeſus, after ye have ſuffered awhile*

Jeſus, for his honeſt confeſſion, in *owning him to be the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*; (Matt. xvi. 13---17) when almoſt all others diſowned him in that character. But will the biſhop ſay, that Chriſt can be Son of the living God, and the living God himſelf, at one and the ſame time; And if he be the Son of the living God, that is, received his being from him, how can he be equal to the living God the Father, from whom he received his being? See alſo Peter's declaration of his ſentiments concerning God and Chriſt, very different from thoſe his lordſhip would fix upon him, in Acts ii. 22, to 37; iii. 13, 22; iv. 24, 27.

awhile, make you perfect, strengthen, stablish you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

INQUIRY XII.

Of the doctrine of the apostle John, in his epistles, concerning God and Christ?

Eusebes. I BEG to know, Artemon, what I am to make of that singular text, 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us:* Does it not, as it now stands, countenance the strange opinion of God dying for us?

Artemon. You might call it not only a strange, but a shocking opinion. The scriptures however are quite clear of the imputation of favouring any thing of this kind. And in the text you have quoted, the words [*of God,*] are not found in any ancient copies of the New Testament, except one of no credit. They also are discarded by three of the most learned inquirers into these subjects, Mill, Westein, and Bengelius. I find them not in the French translations of Martin, or of L'Enfant and Beausobre. And they ought not to be suffered any longer to have a place in our english bibles; because they were not the words of the apostle; and because whilst they remain a part of the scripture, they do great mischief, by instilling unbecoming sentiments of Almighty God into the minds of christians;

and falſe opinions concerning Jeſus Chriſt, as if he were really God.

Euſebes. You muſt now give me leave to aſk your opinion concerning that famous text in this firſt epiſtle of John, which ſpeaks of three Divine Perſons being one, in ſuch plain terms; where the apoſtle ſays, *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and theſe three are One. And there are three that bear witneſs in earth, the ſpirit, and the water, and the blood; and theſe three agree in one.* 1 John v. 7, 8. Are not we here taught that the Son and holy Spirit are one God with the Father?

Artemon. If the part of this verſe, that ſeems to countenance ſuch a notion, were genuine, it would not prove that the *Three* here mentioned are *one* God, For it is not ſaid *theſe three are* [εις, *unus*] one intelligent being, *one Perſon*; but εν, *one thing*; i. e. one and the ſame *teſtimony.* But the truth is, the paſſage is not of the writing of St. John, but crept into ſome latin manuſcripts of the New Teſtament in later times, and has been thence falſely aſcribed to him by the over-great zeal of ſome perſons, who were glad to have him a patron of their favourite doctrine of the Trinity. For the words *(in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and theſe three are One. And there are three that bear witneſs on earth)* have never been proved to be found in the text of any greek manuſcript, before the invention

tion of printing: nor in the text of any ancient verſion; nor were cited by any of the numerous writers in the whole Arian controverſy in the fourth century; and were wanting in all the latin copies both before and long after Cyprian's time. They ought therefore to be eraſed out of our bibles. In the firſt *engliſh* bibles after the reformation, in the time of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. theſe ſuſpected words were honeſtly printed differently from the reſt, to ſignify that they were wanting in the original; which diſtinction was afterwards neglected, but ought to have been *(a)* kept up, to prevent the nation being impoſed upon, and miſled in a point of ſuch great moment. And the ſenſe of the apoſtle is very complete *(b)* without this

(a) It ought to be mentioned to the credit of the author of *A New Tranſlation of the New Teſtament, extracted from the paraphraſe of Dr. Doddridge*, 1765; that he has marked theſe words as not being thoſe of the apoſtle; and has alſo left out the words *of God*, in 1 John iii. 16. They are alſo both left out in an edition of the New Teſtament in greek and engliſh, printed for Roberts, 1729; and perhaps in others that I have not ſeen.

(b) This explanation is Dr. *Clark's*; See *Scripture Doctrine*, p. 231. But ſome may be pleaſed with Dr. *Lardner's* explanation of this obſcure paſſage, 1 Joh. v. 5, 10, as more agreeing with the apoſtle's ſtile and manner.

this addition, as we find his words given us in all the greek manuſcripts and antient tranſlations of the New Teſtament, ver. 5. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jeſus is the Son of God?* ver. 6. *This is he that came* (i. e. was declared and manifeſted to be the Son of God) *by water and blood* (i. e. *by water*, at his baptiſm, when there came a voice from heaven, ſaying, This is my beloved Son: and *by blood*, i. e. by his death and reſurrection:)——*And it is the ſpirit* (i. e. the gifts of the holy ſpirit, and the power of miracles

manner. "To me, it ſeems, (ſays he) that the *water*, an emblem of purity, (Ezek. xxxvi. 25.) denotes the innocence of our Lord's life, which was without ſpot, exemplary; and the reaſonableneſs, excellence, and perfection of his doctrine, which after the ſtricteſt examination, and niceſt ſcrutiny, cannot be charged with any error or falſehood. The *blood* denotes our Lord's willing and patient, though painful and ignominious death; the utmoſt teſtimony that can be given of integrity. The *ſpirit* intends our Lord's many miraculous works, wrought by the ſpirit, the finger, the power of God, or God himſelf. This teſtimony is *truth*, that is exceeding true, ſo that it may be relied upon. For it is unqueſtionable, and cannot be gainſaid. See John v. 32, 37, x. 25. Acts ii. 22. Here are three witneſſes. And *they agree in one*. They are harmonious, all ſaying the ſame thing, and concurring in the ſame teſtimony." *Lardner's* Letter on the Logos, &c. p. 164, 165.

miracles granted to the apostles) *that beareth witness; because the spirit is truth,* (ver. 7.) *For there are three that bear record; the spirit, the water, and the blood; and those three agree in one:* or, as some ancient writers read the text; *these three are one,* viz. one testimony, that Jesus is the Son of God.

Eusebes. Is there not one other passage in this epistle, from which some have argued that Christ is to be considered as the true God?

Artemon. The 20th verse of the fifth chapter, has by later christians had this meaning put upon it, which was never thought of in the first ages of the gospel. Nor would any since have given into such an interpretation, had they considered the words and their connection, without prejudice. For it is of God, *(a)* the Father only, that the apostle speaks, when he says; (1 John v. 20.) *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is True,* or rather, *may know the True God,* τον αληθινον θεον. (So the most and best manuscripts have it, in like manner as John xvii. 3. The apostle proceeds). *And we are in him that is True by his Son, Jesus Christ*; that is, in the True God; for so the construction manifestly requires it to be understood of the same person as before. He then concludes; *This is the True God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.* The meaning

(a) See Dr. *Clarke*'s Scripture Doctrine, &c. p. 54, 55.

meaning is; this is the true God, and the way that leads to him; the true religion, and way to eternal life, viz. the worship of the true God according to the directions, or as the disciples of Jesus Christ. Beware of idol-worship.

Eusebes. In the last book of the New Testament, I find Almighty God introduced, and speaking concerning himself; (Revel. i. 8.) *I am Alpha and Omega, the begining and the ending.* A little after however, (ver. 11.) Jesus Christ is brought in, and says; *I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*; and again, ver. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last*; *I am he that liveth and was dead:* Are not here the same titles given to Jesus Christ as to Almighty God? Must not he therefore be some way or other, the Almighty God?

Artemon. What great necessity is there, Eusebes, for a new translation of the Bible? That part of the eleventh verse, [*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*; *and*] is known, and acknowleged by all learned men, not to be the writing of the apostle, being not found in the most and the best manuscripts, or in the antient versions of the New Testament; and is therefore justly left out of several editions of the greek Testament. The words then ought not to be retained in our english bibles. As to ver. 17, 18. *I am the first and the last, and I am he that liveth and was dead.* It is plain these words cannot be spoken of God, but of a creature, who was made subject to death and mortality

mortality. If men made any use of their understanding, they must see that such things can never be ascribed to the *living and true God.*

Eusebes. There remains only one passage more, Artemon, relating to our Saviour Christ, concerning which I am desirous to have your sentiments. It is in *Revelation* ii. 23, where Christ is ushered in speaking concerning himself; "*All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the heart, and the reins.* Does not this seem to imply that the person who speaks is the omniscient being, is God: for it is the peculiar attribute of God to know the heart?

Artemon. A little attention will convince you, Eusebes, that nothing of this sort will be found to be deducible from our Saviour's language in this place. For you must consider it in connection with other parts of his character, and the account which the writer of this book gives of him. Now St. John thus prefaces his work: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.*" From which it is evident, that the book contains a revelation, or discovery of such things as Jesus did not know of himself, but had them communicated to him from Almighty God. And consequently, this *searching of the heart and reins*, which he attributes to himself, must be such a degree of knowlege of what related to those apostolic churches,

as

as was imparted to him in that firſt age of our religion, when it was thought proper that an extraordinary Divine Power ſhould be exerted in the direction and government of the infant chriſtian church; and in this latitude, and no farther, it is to be underſtood. With the ſame reſtriction we are to take the apoſtle Peter's reply to his divine maſter; (John xxi. 17.) *Lord, thou knoweſt* ALL *things; thou knoweſt that I love thee.* He only meant, that by the great power he had received from God, the Lord Jeſus was acquainted with the ſecret thoughts and diſpoſitions of thoſe he converſed with, and eſpecially of himſelf and his fellow apoſtles. This interpretation is illuſtrated and confirmed by thoſe words of the apoſtle John, to the perſons to whom he ſent his firſt epiſtle; *ye have an unction from the Holy one, and ye know* ALL *things.* 1 John ii. 20. None will imagine him to intend to deſcribe theſe chriſtans as gods, omniſcient. What he therein tells them is, that they had the full knowlege of the chriſtian doctrine divinely communicated to them; eſpecially in what related to the perſons he had immediately before been ſpeaking of; whoſe grievous errors concerning Chriſt, he ſpecifies immediately after; ver. 21. 22.

INQUIRY

INQUIRY XIII.

Of the sentiment and doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, concerning the Spirit, or Holy Spirit.

Eusebes. You have convinced me that our Saviour Christ never intimated, in the least degree, that he was the most high God; and that neither his apostles, nor the evangelists ever taught any thing of the kind; but, the contrary. I must now beg leave to trouble you with my inquiries, what it is that the scriptures really teach concerning the *Spirit*, or *holy Spirit*. For many christians look upon this to be God, the most high God, equal to the Father; and accordingly pray to him and worship him. Do our Saviour and his apostles teach that there is any such person who is God, and to be worshiped by us?

Artemon. Our Saviour and his apostles appear utterly unacquainted with any God, or Divine Person, called the Spirit, or holy Spirit, distinct from the heavenly Father of all, whom they stile the only true God.

Eusebes. Upon what grounds do you say this?

Artemon. Upon this sure ground, that we never find that either Christ or his apostles either prayed

themſelves, or directed others to pray and give thanks, or pay any religious acknowlegements to any ſuch Divine Perſon, called the Spirit, the holy Spirit, as they do to God, the Father, continually; and which aſſuredly they would not have neglected here, had there been any ſuch perſon who was God, equal to the Father. And moreover, although they make mention of the gifts of the Spirit, theſe gifts are never deſcribed as aſked of, or given by the Spirit; which unqueſtionably would have been at leaſt ſometimes done, had there been any ſuch perſon, *(a)* who was God, and equally with the Father, to be acknowleged and worſhiped.

Euſebes. But does not Chriſt ſpeak of *blaſphemy againſt the holy Spirit*, as a ſin never to be forgiven? And does not this argue, that he muſt be God, againſt whom this ſin is ſaid to be committed?

Artemon.

(a) "Some things in the preſcribed form of Ordi-
"nation of prieſts and deacons, in the church of Eng-
"land, he did not approve, and could not uſe; par-
"ticularly the hymn;

"*Come holy Ghoſt, eternal God,*
"*Proceeding from above, &c.*"

Memoirs of the life of Dr. Sam. Clarke,
by Mr. Emlyn, p. 493.

Artemon. The passage you allude to is in Matthew xii. 31, 32. and runs thus, "*Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy* of *the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men*; *and whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven: but whosoever speaketh against the holy spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" You here perceive that there is no such language used as that of *sin against the holy Spirit*; but only *blasphemy of the Spirit*, or speaking against the holy Spirit. And it is evident, that our Saviour, by the Spirit, or holy Spirit, here mentioned by him, meant only that divine power, by which he was enabled to work the miracle which was here cavilled at. For by comparing the parallel accounts of the same transaction by St. Matthew and St. Luke; [Matth. xii. 28. *But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God, is come unto you:* Luke xi. 20. *But if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you:*] you find that what the former calls *the Spirit of God*, the other calls *the finger of God.* From which it is obvious, that it is not any Divine Person that is here called the Spirit of God, but that it is only the finger or power of God, which is so termed; that power, by which Christ was enabled to do his miraculous works.

And the great sin of these Jews, called *the blasphemy of the Spirit, or speaking against the holy Spirit*, lay in this; that though they could not deny the miraculous cure wrought by Jesus upon the demoniac, they insisted on it being done by a communication with Belzebub, the prince of demons, and not by any power from God: which shewed their obstinate and incorrigible wickedness, and that they were incapable of forgiveness, because incapable of repentance, whilst such dispositions remained in them.

Eusebes. Is the Spirit, or holy Spirit, in other places of scripture, to be understood of an extraordinary power, and gift, or gifts from God; and not as being a Divine Person, or intelligent agent?

Artemon. Yes: it is very generally so to be understood; especially in the writings of the New Testament. Thus our Saviour encourages his apostles, Matth. x. 19, 20. *When they deliver you up* (to be judged for the gospel sake) *be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.* St. Mark and Luke, in the parallel places, call it *the holy Spirit.* All of them doubtless thereby intended the Divine influence. Thus also it is said of Christ himself, John iii. 34. *He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.*

Sometimes

Sometimes it ſignifies thoſe particular extraordinary gifts which were predicted and promiſed by Chriſt, and beſtowed upon the apoſtles and firſt chriſtians, after his reſurrection. Thus after our Saviour had ſpoken in highly figurative terms, borrowed from their ancient prophets, of ſome great bleſſings which his followers were to derive from him: the ſacred hiſtorian remarks upon it; (John vii. 39.) *But this ſpake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him ſhould receive: for the holy Spirit was not yet given, becauſe that Jeſus was not yet glorified.* Here it is obvious, that the *Spirit*, or *holy Spirit*, ſtands for thoſe extraordinary divine gifts or powers, that were afterwards beſtowed on the followers of Chriſt.

Euſebes. But do not the terms in which our Saviour mentions the extraordinary aids which would be given to his followers, plainly beſpeak the holy Spirit to be a real perſon, though inferior to Chriſt, as one ſent by him, and in ſome meaſure put under his direction? As for inſtance, where he ſays, John xiv. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the ſpirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him.* And xvi. 7, &c. *It is expedient for you, that I go away. For if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will ſend him unto you. I have yet many things to ſay unto you but*

ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Artemon. Every one must interpret and judge for himself in these matters. And so long as he looks upon the Spirit to be an inferior agent, employed by God, and not the most high God; there can be nothing contradictory to the other parts of scripture, to suppose it to be a person really existing. But the contrary sentiment is more agreeable to the general tenor of the scriptures, and the stile in which they are written, to consider the *spirit of truth* here as personified, represented as a person, by a very usual figure of speech, in the sacred, and in other writers. Thus, as I have had occasion to mention to you before in the course of our conversation, in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, to inculcate the belief of an all-wise providence, by which the world was first made, and all things are governed; *Wisdom* is introduced as a *Divine Person*, and described, as dwelling and conversing with God from all eternity, and particularly engaged and concerned in the creation of this world of ours, and in the affairs of mankind. St. Paul also, 1 Cor. xiii. holds forth *Charity*, or benevolence, with the attributes of a person really existing and acting. And in the same way

way our Saviour, in the words which you have just now quoted, very naturally tells his sorrowful and dejected disciples, that the extraordinary assistance that would be given them after his departure from them, would be as it were, another Comforter or Advocate to them in his stead, who would plead their cause and be always with them; by whom they would be the more fully confirmed in the belief of those things which they had heard from him, and would have many of their prejudices removed, which threw a mist before their eyes, whilst he was in person with them; and the success of his gospel be effectually promoted; which he calls his being glorified by the spirit. There is a beauty and energy in this animated stile of description far beyond that of a plainer narrative: nor would it be easy to mistake it, if men did not come to the reading of the scriptures with a wrong bias on their minds, to which they bend every thing they meet with.

This interpretation is confirmed, as has been often observed, by the evangelist St. Luke, in his book of *The Acts*; in which he records the fulfilment of this promise of our Saviour's, of sending the Comforter, the holy Spirit, to his disciples. For there we find no new powerful intelligent agent, or real divine person, introduced; but only a plentiful effusion of miraculous gifts bestowed upon the apostles. And there is additional strength given to this interpretation, from *the holy spirit* being the common

common phrase by which christians spoke of these extraordinary divine powers, which were in the first age conferred upon them in great abundance. Thus the apostle Peter, vindicating the calling of the gentiles to the knowlege of the gospel, without being made subject to the law of Moses; says, Acts xv. 8. *God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the holy Spirit, even as he did unto us.* And Acts xix. 2. *Paul said unto them; have ye received the holy Spirit since ye believed? And they said unto him; we have not so much as heard whether there be any holy Spirit.* In all these instances none can doubt but that by the *holy Spirit* is meant those miraculous gifts then bestowed on believers of the gospel. But see *The Acts* throughout.

Eusebes. But how, I pray, am I to interpret that language of St. Peter, where he seems expressly to stile the holy Spirit, God? It is in *Acts* v. 3. where the apostle is mentioned, as saying to the man, who pretended he had given in his whole substance to the common stock, whilst he kept back part of it; "*Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?—thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*"

Artemon. Nothing but the force of strong early prejudice in favour of the doctrine learnt in your childhood, could ever make you or any sensible person entertain the most distant thought that there was another God, called the holy Spirit, or holy Ghost,

here

here ſpoken of, diſtinct and different from the one living and true God, the Father: whom the uniform language of the holy ſcriptures throughout proclaimeth to be the only true God, and no other perſon whatever to be in any way equal or like unto him. There is no difficulty in comprehending that Ananias might be ſaid by lying to the holy Spirit to lie to God himſelf; ſince by endeavouring to paſs a fraud upon the apoſtles, who acted by a divine extraordinary power, amounted to the ſame as endeavouring to impoſe upon God himſelf, from whom they received that power, and whoſe miniſters they were. So Luke x. 16. our Lord ſays to his apoſtles; "*He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.* Now although he that deſpiſed the apoſtles, deſpiſed not only Chriſt, but God himſelf; it did not hence follow, that Chriſt was God, or that his apoſtles were Gods.

Euſebes. May I aſk you, Artemon, in what way you interpret that pious concluſion of one of St. Paul's epiſtles; (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) *The grace* (or favour) *of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Spirit, be with you all?* Is not the holy Spirit put there upon the ſame rank with God himſelf; and ſaid to communicate bleſſings to chriſtians?

Artemon. You well know, Euſebes, that it is by no means to be inferred from things or perſons being

being coupled in this manner together, that they are therefore all of the ſame kind or rank: for if ſo, you might conclude that the angels were Gods, from that paſſage in 1 Tim. v. 21. *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the elect angels*; and ſo on. The apoſtle here, by ſaying, *the communion of the holy ſpirit be with you*, intends only to expreſs a devout wiſh, that they to whom he writes might be partakers of the extraordinary gifts, and of all the bleſſings of the goſpel.

Euſebes. I am often at a loſs how to underſtand that exhortation of the apoſtle, Eph. iv. 30. *Grieve not the holy ſpirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed unto the day of redemption.* Does it not imply that the holy Spirit is a diſtinct divine perſon, who takes an intereſted part in the affairs of man's ſalvation?

Artemon. You will find it very eaſy and intelligible, without recurring to ſuch ſtrange and groundleſs ſuppoſitions, by taking this along with you in your interpretation of it; *viz.* that the Spirit, or holy Spirit of God, is ſometimes put for God himſelf; as the ſpirit of a man ſignifies the man himſelf. This is taught by St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 11. when he obſerves; *what man knoweth the things of a man, ſave the ſpirit of a man which is him? even ſo the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.* This exhortation then, of *not grieving the holy Spirit of God*, is to be underſtood, of not grieving the Almighty Being himſelf, who had

ſealed,

sealed, &c. i. e. had favoured these Ephesian christians with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. And to him it is they were not to give concern, by their improper behaviour and mismanagement of his gifts. The very same phrase is used by the prophet Isaiah, as expressive of the most compassionate regards of Almighty God for his people Israel: when speaking of their great wickedness, he says; *they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit*, Isaiah lxiii. 10.

Or, perhaps, you may not dislike this other interpretation; viz. that the holy Spirit, which they were not to grieve, is put for persons who were endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. As when St. Paul says; Acts xx. 23. *The holy Spirit witnesseth in every city; saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me*; he means it of persons who had the holy Spirit, to whom an extraordinary divine revelation had been made of the sufferings he was to undergo for the sake of the gospel. So here likewise, (and it admirably suits the connection of the apostle's discourse with what goes before and follows after,) he is to be understood as saying; "Grieve not, by your light conversation or dissentions, those good men, who labour for your salvation: for which service they have the extraordinary gifts and assistance of the spirit of God bestowed upon them."

Eusebes. I shall trouble you with but one question more on this matter, and that is, to know at what time it was, that christians first began publicly

licly to acknowledge the Holy Spirit as a diſtinct God, and object of worſhip; which you have proved to me to have no authority or ſupport from the word of God?

Artemon. It is a fact of great notoriety, that the Holy Spirit was not publicly acknowleged as God, and to be worſhiped as ſuch, for the firſt three hundred years after Chriſt. It is alſo remarkable, that at the famous council of Nice, in the year 325, all that was inſerted about the holy Spirit, was barely, "I believe in the holy Spirit." That which makes the principal part of the Nicene Creed now, relating to the Holy Spirit, did not originally belong to it, but was added about half a century afterwards, in the ſecond general council, as it is called, of Conſtantinople. The words then added after "I believe in the Holy Ghoſt" were theſe, "The Lord and Giver of life, who "proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who "with the Father and the Son together, is wor-"ſhipped and glorified, who ſpake by the pro-"phets." So that there is no colour of foundation in the holy ſcripture for the belief of any perſon called the Spirit, or holy Spirit, as being God: and the worſhip of this Spirit, as a Divine Perſon, did not become publicly authorized among chriſtians, 'till they were ſinking into the very dregs of pagan idolatry. For, about this period, that is, at the latter end of the fourth century, came in the wor-

ſhip

ſhip of dead men and women, called Saints; and the worſhip of their bones, hair, garments, and other things belonging to them, called *relics*.

INQUIRY XIV.

Of the origin of the very early and laſting errors among chriſtians, concerning God and Chriſt.

Euſebes. I AM highly obliged to you, Artemon, for the ſatisfaction you have given me in all my queſtions and doubts that I have propoſed to you. You have demonſtrated to me, from the ſacred writings, and the words of Chriſt and his apoſtles in particular; that there is no other perſon who is God, but the Father only. If it would not detain you too long, I would beg the favour of you, before we part, to ſet my mind at reſt a little, by acquainting me, how it came to paſs; by what ſteps and degrees it was, that the whole chriſtian world fell away from this knowlege and adoration of the one only and true God, the Father, and joined two other perſons with him, whom they called God the Son, and God the holy Ghoſt, or holy Spirit; each of whom they looked upon as equally God with the Father, and equally to be adored by them?

Artemon. You muſt not miſtake here, Euſebes. All chriſtians did not decline from the worſhip of the one living and true God, the Father, to the worſhip of two other perſons, who were not Gods.

The jews, who in no ſmall number at firſt embraced chriſtianity, *(a)* never departed from the doctrine of the Divine Unity, but preſerved it pure and uncorrupt, whilſt they were ſuffered to remain in their own country; and afterwards carried it along with them into other countries, where they were diſperſed. Theſe early jewiſh chriſtians, who were ſuch ſtrict Unitarians, might have been a means of keeping the heathens, that in ſuch great numbers were converted to the goſpel, ſteady in this moſt important article, if they had been upon good terms with each other. And this was a point which St. Paul had much at heart, and laboured moſt earneſtly

(a) Ancients and moderns bear teſtimony to the ſtedfaſt adherence of theſe jewiſh chriſtians to the doctrine of the Divine Unity, although ſome of theſe chriſtian writers, who had degenerated from this great truth themſelves, are pleaſed to call that an error, which was taught by Moſes firſt, and afterwards by Jeſus and his apoſtles. See Beauſobre Hiſt. de Manich. tom. ii. p. 517. where he quotes the famous Athanaſius, relating, " *that in the time of the apoſtles, the jews were in this error, and drew the gentiles into it*; viz. *that Chriſt is only a mere man, and not God*; *and that the word was not fleſh*; meaning, we may ſuppoſe, by the laſt clauſe, that theſe early jewiſh believers did not conſider the *word*, the logos, in the begining of John's goſpel, as a name of Chriſt, but an attribute of God himſelf.

A

earneſtly to promote; as every one muſt have obſerved who is acquainted with his hiſtory, and reads his epiſtles.

Euſebes. What might it be that made the jewiſh and heathen converts not unite ſo cordially with each other?

Artemon. The jewiſh chriſtians could not be brought to give up at once their old religious cuſtoms; which is not to be wondered at, as they had had the ſanction of divine authority for them, tho' that authority was ſuperſeded by the goſpel; but they continued to obſerve diſtinctions of days, and meats, and the like, which unavoidably kept them at an unſocial diſtance from other chriſtians, who paid no regard to theſe things. And St. Paul, though he thought ſuch an attachment a weakneſs, yet did he not condemn it as ſinful in his countrymen, ſo long as they did not impoſe ſuch obſervances on others, nor make them neceſſary to ſalvation.

Euſebes. Was there any thing elſe that kept them aſunder from each other?

Artemon. The jewiſh chriſtians being poor, through the troubles and diſtreſſes of their country, which ended in its utter deſtruction; and being alſo in general unſkilled in philoſophy and the learning of the times, were too much deſpiſed and undervalued by the learned heathen converts, who paid little regard to their ſentiments, and took the lead in every thing.

Eusebes. How high can you trace the beginning of this corruption of the true doctrine concerning God and Christ?

Artemon. The first appearance of it was in the very days of the apostles, and took its rise from the heathen converts chiefly, and some few perhaps of the jews mixed with them, who were tinctured with their learning and philosophy.

Eusebes. What might it be that gave immediate occasion to their deviation from the doctrine of the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ?

Artemon. Certain philosophical notions of theirs, mixed with vanity and worldly prejudices, made them unwilling to believe, and ashamed to own, that the founder of their religion was a mortal man, who suffered an ignominious and painful death upon a cross: and therefore they persuaded themselves, and maintained, that he was not a man in reality, nor suffered in reality, but in appearance only.

Eusebes. Where is there any mention made in the New Testament of this strange perversion of the truth concerning Christ?

Artemon. St. Paul appears to have had a foresight of these errors before they had grown to any great height, and gave faithful warning of them, in his frequent cautions concerning their subtle, endless disputes and speculations of the platonic, or rather oriental philosophy, relating to the Deity, and the different emanations from him. *Beware,* (says he)

Coloss.

Coloſſ. ii. 8, 9.) *leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Chriſt. For in him dwelleth all the fulneſs of the godhead,* (rather of the divine power) *bodily.* And 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy truſt, avoiding profane and vain bablings, and oppoſitions of ſcience, falſely ſo called. Which ſome profeſſing, have erred concerning the faith.* You will do well alſo to conſult 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, Tit. iii. 9. But the apoſtle John lived to ſee theſe errors ſpring up, and bear much bitter fruit. It is the obvious main deſign of his two firſt epiſtles, which were written when he was far advanced in years, to cenſure and bear teſtimony againſt certain chriſtians, who *denied Jeſus Chriſt to be (a) come in fleſh*; *(b)* that is,

 would

(a) The Manichean chriſtians, who fell into great errors, are known to have drank deep of this in particular; ſo as to have denied Chriſt to have had any human nature at all. Ambroſe, ſpeaking of theſe men, by way of reproof, ſays, "cum Manichæus adoraverit, quem in carne veniſſe non credidit." i. e. they worſhiped Chriſt, though they did not believe him to have *come in fleſh*; to have been a man. This ſhews how the ancients underſtood the phraſe of Chriſt *coming in fleſh*; namely, of his being really a man, See Lardner's Credibility, part 2. vol. vi. p, 276.

(b) Perhaps the apoſtle's words might be thus more properly,

would not allow Chriſt to have been really a man; but one in appearance only. You cannot but perceive how offenſive ſuch a doctrine muſt be to the venerable apoſtle, who, in perfect agreement with the other apoſtles and evangeliſts, conſtantly ſpeaks of Chriſt as a man, liable to ſufferings and death, as others were; and deſcribes the ill treatment and oppoſition he met with in the cauſe of divine truth, eſpecially

properly given in engliſh; that theſe men did not confeſs, or denied, that Jeſus, who came in fleſh, was the Chriſt. For this, ſee a letter of Limborch to Mr. Locke, where he points out the miſtake of the French tranſlation of 2 John 7. the ſame as in our own; and that it ought not to be as in our preſent tranſlation; *many deceivers are entered into the world, who confeſs not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in fleſh*—but *who confeſs not that Jeſus who came in fleſh, is the Chriſt:* and he obſerves, that in like manner, the rendering of 1 John iv. 2, 3. ſhould be altered. *Locke's* Works, vol. iv. p. 425. Biſhop of Carliſle's edition.

There is a difficulty in coming at the exact meaning of theſe firſt innovators and corrupters of the true doctrine of the ſcriptures concerning Chriſt. We find that they ſeparated the Chriſt from Jeſus, becauſe they would not have it ſuppoſed that the Chriſt was a man, which Jeſus confeſſedly was. They ſeem to have thought that the Chriſt was an emanation of the Deity, the firſt begotten of the Father, who deſcended upon

especially the distress and pain he underwent, before and at the time of his death, as most grievous to him, and appointed by God, as for other ends, so particularly for the trial of his obedience: and his patience, fortitude, and resignation under them, are mentioned as the things for which he was worthily exalted to honour by the supreme Father; and are continually held forth as an example and encouragement to his followers under their trials. As these great ends of the gospel were wholly defeated by the groundless conceit of these men concerning Christ, we cannot wonder to see the disciple whom Jesus shewed an especial affection for, and who could not but be well acquainted with him, in his letter upon this subject, striking abruptly, all

upon Jesus at his baptism, when he wrought miracles, and declared the will of the unknown Father; and which afterwards continued to be united in Jesus, but no farther than was necessary for the discharge of his great office; and that when his ministry was finished, the Christ being spiritual, and incapable of suffering, left him, and Jesus was taken, and put to death on the cross, and raised again to life. See Beausobre, Hist. de Manich. p. 28.—and his notes on the epistle of St. John; and Lardner's Hist. of Heretics, in Basilides, Cerinthus, and Marcion; a curious, valuable work, *unic* in our language.

(a) all at once as it were into it, in the very begining; and maintaining by a variety of ſtrong expreſſion and argument, that he had the moſt abſolute undeniable evidence, and conviction, that his Divine Maſter, the great Teacher of eternal life from God, was really a man. He afterwards takes up the ſubject again and again, in the courſe of this his firſt epiſtle, and alſo in the ſecond; and through the whole ſhews himſelf exceedingly hurt and diſturbed, that he ſhould live to ſee any ſo obſtinate and ſhameleſs as to call it in queſtion.

Euſebes. I ſhould be glad to be informed, Artemon, if there be any collateral teſtimony of ancient authors, to corroborate this account which you give of St. John's deſign in writing theſe epiſtles; and which ſhews that theſe firſt chriſtians are juſtly chargeable with ſo groſs an error concerning Chriſt, as you here impute to them?

Artemon. There is ſcarcely any point in ſo remote antiquity, of which we are better aſſured. Ignatius,

(a) That which was from the begining, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. For the life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us. That which we have ſeen and heard, &c, 1 John i. 1, 2, 3.

Ignatius, Irenæus, Jerom, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Augustin, speak of it very particularly, and condemn it. And the learned moderns, who have been most conversant in these matters, take notice of it; Petavius, Cotelerius, Le Clerc, Tillotson, Beausobre, Lardner. Indeed it cannot be justly doubted, or denied. And whatever other antichrist there may be in the world, the chief antichristian *(a)* error of those early times, and that which is stigmatized as such by our apostle, was, *the denying Christ to have been really a man, subject to infirmities, suffering, and death.*

Eusebes. What, I pray, was the farther progress of this corruption of the true doctrine concerning Christ?

Artemon. Such an immediate, open, and direct confutation and condemnation of it, by an apostle of Christ, seems to have given such a check to it, that it died away of itself in the course of a few years; and we hear no more of any that were so absurd as to maintain it. But the seeds of it, alas! still remained, and produced the most lasting and fatal corruption of the true doctrine of the scriptures concerning Christ, which continues wide spread to this day. For these learned heathen converts to christianity,

(a) Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not, that Jesus, who came in flesh, is the Christ. This is a deceiver, and an ANTICHRIST. 2 John 7.

chriſtianity, were ſtill aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt; and not content with ſuch a Saviour as the ſcriptures held forth to them. And therefore, as it was the doctrine of their ſchools, before they embraced the goſpel, that there was one ſupreme God over all, and *(a)* a ſecond God, an inferior ſpirit, made by him, and his under-agent, in creating

(a) Juſtin Martyr, in his ſecond apology, (*Paris* ed. 1615. p. 92, 93.) aſſerts that "Moſes and Plato and the chriſtians, were all agreed about the creation of the world by the *word* of God." And in the ſame place he remarks, that "Plato received from Moſes what he utters in his Timæs, concerning the Son of God, or the Power next to the Chief God;" as he there terms it. A little before, in the ſame work, he had ſaid, p. 74. "The firſt power, next after God, the Father, and ſovereign Lord of all, is the *word* and Son; but in what manner being made fleſh, he became a man, I ſhall ſhew hereafter." How much better would it have been if this worthy man had abſtained from blending Plato's philoſophy with the goſpel; and inſtead of maintaining that a mighty preexiſtent Spirit, next to God, and the ſubordinate creator of all things, was born of the virgin Mary, in the ſtate of an helpleſs infant; had contented himſelf with what was the obvious meaning of the ſcriptures on this head, viz. that by the holy Spirit, or miraculous power of God, Chriſt was produced and born of Mary, a virgin, out of the ordinary courſe of generation, as Adam was firſt created by the ſame power.

ing the world; they took it for granted, from ſome expreſſions of the goſpel ill underſtood, particularly in the entrance of St. John's goſpel, that Chriſt was the ſecond God of their philoſophy, who took fleſh of the virgin Mary, and became a man. And from this they went on to aſſert; that it was he that made the world, *(a)* who appeared to the patriarchs, and to Moſes, and who was the oſtenſible and acting God and governor of the nation of Iſrael; whilſt the ſupreme God lived retired, and was always inviſible. This was the capital miſtake which that good man, and ingenious writer, Juſtin Martin fell into; who embraced chriſtianity about twelve years after the death of the apoſtle John. Though a native of Paleſtine he was very ignorant of the hebrew language; and nevertheleſs preſumed to put his own ſenſe upon the hebrew ſcriptures, and that intirely different from what any jew before had ever eſpouſed, and to which Chriſt and his apoſtles appear to have been utter ſtrangers. Unhappily, having been bred a philoſopher, and inveloped in heathen darkneſs, he could not ſhake off his former opinions and prejudices, but grafted them upon his new religion, and has miſled many wiſer and more able men than himſelf,

(a) This moſt ſtrange doctrine of Chriſt being the agent Deity of the Old World, is conſidered at large, in ch. vi. of "A Sequel to the Apology on reſigning "the Vicarage of Catterick."

himself, in all ages to the present. But this error concerning Christ did not stop here. These heathen converts to christianity, went on afterwards deviating more and more from the doctrine of the holy scriptures in this matter; till, at length, it came to be established at the council of Nice, in the year 325, under the sanction of imperial authority; (an authority however of no value in the things of religion) that Jesus Christ was *very God, of one substance with the Father*, and the person *by whom all things were made.*

INQUIRY XV.

Why such early and lasting corruptions of the gospel have been permitted.

Eusebes. Excuse me, I beg, if I detain you one moment longer. These corruptions of our holy religion, of which you have been speaking, with others of the like sort, are thought by many to bear hard against it, as if a system so imperfect, so soon abused, and so inadequate to the reformation of mankind, could not come from God. You will do me a singular kindness by favouring me with your sentiments on this intricate point.

Artemon. Depend upon it, Eusebes, these are objections that spring only from our ignorance. We do not enough consider how lately we were brought into being, and what unfinished creatures

we

we are, to whom this divine revelation is made; and we pronounce too haſtily concerning the deſigns of God in it, all which may be anſwered, and be moſt worthy of him, though far ſhort of our expectations. All that can rightly be called the goſpel of Chriſt, the way to eternal life, is a plain intelligible doctrine. Yet at firſt, and in all times ſince, having been delivered to and received by men with a thouſand wrong habits and ways of thinking on divine ſubjects rivetted in them, theſe would unavoidably mix themſelves with their new religion, and deprave it more or leſs, without ſome extraordinary interpoſition to prevent it, and to give a new caſt to their minds; which did not take place, nor were there any grounds to expect it. Some alſo would be found, who out of intereſted, and other unworthy motives, would ſet themſelves to lower and debaſe the purity of this heavenly inſtitution. Here then were ſome very natural impediments in its way, which were likely to obſtruct its progreſs and good effects. And it is a ſatisfaction to obſerve, that theſe offences and obſtacles to the truth, were foretold in the chriſtian ſcriptures in a very particular manner, and the faithful ſervants of God forewarned and inſtructed what part they were to act in ſuch ſeaſons of prevailing degeneracy and corruption. So that as you are fully convinced, as every fair unprejudiced inquirer will be, that Jeſus was *a Teacher*, (John iii. 2.) *come from God*, that

that is, who ſpoke and acted by a divine authority; and that we have his meſſage and inſtructions to men, faithfully recorded and preſerved: You need not be diſturbed about their fate and reception in the world. It is the cauſe of God, and he will ſee to it.

But we cannot be contented with God's way, and methods with us, and to wait his time. We are for having perfection immediately to be beſtowed upon ourſelves: happineſs without mixture of pain; knowlege without error. And ſome will preſume to blame, that ſo much perplexity, pain, and evil is admitted into his works, as if they had more compaſſion and goodneſs than the kind Creator and Father of all. But we ſhould remember, that this life is but the begining of our exiſtence; and that our Maker's benevolent plan and purpoſe for us reaches through all time; is not merely to confer preſent happineſs, although this abounds amongſt mankind; but that which is to laſt for ever. And if the avenue that leads to it, be at times dark and uncomfortable, we may not doubt but that it was ſo contrived with the kindeſt deſign, becauſe Infinite Wiſdom ſaw that it would tend to our greater virtuous improvement, and final felicity. His watchful providence we ſee continually at work, and producing an increaſe and overflow of good from thoſe very corruptions of true religion, of which you complain. For the perver-

ſion

ſion and abuſe of the Scriptures has excited enquiry, and the ſtudy of thoſe invaluable writings: which otherwiſe might have been wholly neglected; and we in theſe latter ages might have been deprived of many advantages for the better underſtanding and defence of them, which we now enjoy. A conviction alſo of the weakneſs, ignorance, and fallibility of our nature, which always cleaves to us in the midſt of our reſearches into the word and will of God, makes us more forbearing and equitable towards thoſe that diſſent from us, and tends to beget in us a ſpirit of juſt humility and teachableneſs; which are qualities and diſpoſitions of much more conſequence to our future happineſs and progreſſive improvements, than the moſt accurate extenſive knowlege which we could lay in here. And perhaps that prevailing love, preference, and regard for God, for truth and righteouſneſs above all other things, by which alone we can be fixed in complete and permanent happineſs, could only be generated in us, by the obſtacles, difficulties, temptations, and ſufferings, which we have to encounter with, and to overcome in our way to attain it, in this our probationary ſtate. That ſympathy and benevolent concern for the virtuous attainments and final happineſs of our fellow-creatures, which will likewiſe make one of the chief ingredients of our own bliſs in the heavenly ſtate, could not, it may be, have been ſo effectually pro-

FIVE SERMONS

ON THE

FOLLOWING SUBJECTS, VIZ.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,

AND THE

IMPOSSIBILITY OF ITS BEING IN DANGER.

THE SCRIPTURE IDEA OF HERESY.

MYSTERIES MADE PLAIN.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

THE PLACE, OBJECT, AND MANNER OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

By GEORGE ROGERS, M. A.

RECTOR OF SPROUGHTON, IN SUFFOLK, AND LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON:

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TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

FREDERICK,

LORD BISHOP OF DERRY.

AMONG the *few* of your Lordſhip's Eccleſiaſtical Dignity, who have nobly dared to aſſert the Rights of Civil and Religious Liberty, and thought no action foreign or unſuitable to their *holy profeſſion*, which could advance the intereſts of mankind, the Biſhops of the ſee of *Derry* have been the moſt diſtinguiſhed; and your Lordſhip, though laſt, not leaſt, among that *ſacred* band.

If I had, therefore, no private favours to acknowledge, no perſonal eſteem or regard to teſtify, which no one knows to value more highly, or can hold more dear than myſelf, I ſhould ſtill look up

to you as the ableſt advocate for that liberty I have claimed, and ſolicit the ſanction of your name to patronize theſe Diſcourſes.

The purpoſe for which they were written, will juſtify this choice.

To diſpel from Chriſtianity that dark cloud of *myſtery*, which has been ſo long hanging over it, and to exhibit it in its native dreſs, in which we ſee it in the Scriptures, and thus to recommend it to its votaries, and attach them to its ſervice, was the deſign of this publication.

To effect this, I have exerciſed the right of private judgment in my interpretations of the Scriptures, neither preſuming to be infallible myſelf, nor acknowledging that claim in others. I have thus endeavoured to place our Religion upon its only firm and immoveable baſis, the Word of God, explained by every individual for himſelf.

Could we once be brought to think, that the worſt *Hereſy* is a bad life; that no *Church* can be in *Danger*, which has no corruptions in it; that the only *Atonement* for our ſins, is Repentance and Amendment; that the *Faith* we ought to contend for, is, "*That which was once delivered to the Saints:*" Could we but agree about theſe *fundamental* parts of our religion, it would matter little, how much we diſagreed about the reſt. Were thoſe barriers beaten down, which have been kept up, to create diſtinctions,

tions, and kindle animofities; and *a unity of practice* fought for, which *may* be had; inftead of a *unity of opinion*, which *cannot* be obtained, we might be held together by the only bond that can be lafting, and known by the only mark of diftinction that is worth preferving, it being the true *Chriftian* one, our *love* and good-will towards each other.

The happy effects of this Chriftian temper, have been widely fpread throughout your Lordfhip's diocefe. That liberality of mind and equal regard which you have always fhewn to good men of all denominations, has helped to unite the moft difcordant fects, to foften the rancour which Prejudice and Bigotry had foftered, and as far as it was neceffary for every good purpofe of fociety, melted down into a general union, thofe jarring and diffonant opinions; and made all confpire to promote the happinefs of each other; the diftinguifhing appellations of Catholic, Prefbyterian, and Churchman, have all been funk into the common name of *Chriftian*. And the only ftruggle that now fubfifts between them is, which fhould give the greateft proofs of their zeal, and their affection to their common Friend and Patron.

And is it to be wondered at, that fuch peace and unanimity fhould now prevail in a city, once the feat of party rage and religious hatred? The citizens alike perceiving, that your differing from

any

any individual in opinion, produced in you no diminution of perſonal regard for *him*, caught the ſame liberality of ſpirit, and were actuated by the ſame ſentiments towards each other. Thus when your Lordſhip nobly propoſed to erect a Chapel for the Roman Catholics of Derry, there was not a Churchman or Sectary, who did not eagerly adopt your *truly* Catholic principle, and contend for the honour of laying the firſt ſtone of that edifice *. The *Eſtabliſhment*, in particular, ſaw no *Danger* to themſelves

* What ſatisfaction it muſt have afforded to a liberal mind, to have ſeen the Biſhop of the Dioceſe, with the Titular Biſhop, joined by the Mayor of the Corporation, the Dean of the Cathedral, and the Two Diſſenting Miniſters, all going in proceſſion to lay the firſt ſtone of the Popiſh Chapel; which is now completed, and affords an example that does honour to the Prelate, and to the citizens that followed it. Bluſh, ye zealots and bigots, and learn for once a leſſon of good-will and Chriſtian charity, from thoſe ye have been taught to hate and to deſpiſe. We have had our proceſſion too in this country, (or rather our AUTO DA FE); but it has been of a far different kind from that above-mentioned. It was not indeed PERSONALLY ATTENDED by *Biſhops* and *Magiſtrates*, nor was it ſet on foot with the deſign of *laying the firſt ſtone of any place of worſhip*; but with the oppoſite intention *of not leaving one ſtone upon another* in any religious

ſelves from performing the offices of friendſhip and humanity towards the members of a different Communion; nor did they pollute the name of their *Church*, to ſanctify Oppreſſion, Violence, and Wrong.

———pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Et dici potuiſſe, et non potuiſſe refelli.

Your own liberal example, my Lord, has conſpired with the wiſdom of the Legiſlature, which has had no occaſion to regret the conceſſion of a full enjoyment of religious rights to the Diſſenters of Ireland; as it has found, that the obligation to the diſcharge of civil duties, has not been leſſened, but increaſed, by ſuch a grant. And let us hope, that the time is coming, when this wiſe policy will be adopted by every Legiſlature; when not only the Proteſtant Diſſenters, but every other claſs of Chriſtians, will enjoy both their Religious and Civil Rights; and when the State ſhall wiſely avail itſelf of the abilities and integrity of every citizen, and when

religious ſtructure, whoſe form was not exactly according to the plan laid down by the State. Such is the difference between *building* and *burning!* The one proceeding from the true Chriſtian ſpirit of benevolence and good-will to all: The other, from the blind and furious rage of perſecuting zeal and intolerant bigotry.

when active exertions in behalf of Civil and Religious Liberty, will be the only *Test* that remains for a free and happy people to give of their zeal for a country, which merits their attachment, by blessing every virtuous inhabitant with equal and impartial privileges.

I have the honour to be,

My LORD,

With great esteem and regard,

Your LORDSHIP'S

Very obliged and obedient

Humble Servant,

GEO. ROGERS.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ITS BEING IN DANGER.

MATT. xvi. 18.

Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.

OUR Saviour having worked many miracles, in teſtimony of his divine miſſion, was willing to learn whether theſe proofs had produced their proper effects, by leading men to conclude, that they were certain evidences of his being the Meſſiah. He aſked his Diſciples, ſaying, "Whom do men ſay that I, the ſon of man, am?" He aſſumes no title above others, but ranks himſelf with the reſt of mankind; with all thoſe who are equally "the ſons of men" with himſelf; and leaves it to them to make the diſtinction which marked the peculiarity of his character; that they might aſcribe it to the works he had performed, and not to any thing naturally ſuperior to others in his perſon. The anſwer they made was, "Some ſay that thou art John the Baptiſt; ſome Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the Prophets." However miſtaken they were with regard to the exact perſon of Chriſt, yet every one agreed in looking upon him as a human

being, though endued with authority, and a divine commiſſion. He aſks again, " But whom, ſay ye, that I am ?" They had been his conſtant attendants, had heard his doctrines, and ſeen his miracles, and were qualified to give a moſt expreſs anſwer to this queſtion. Accordingly, Simon Peter anſwered, and ſaid, " Thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God." *i. e.* Thou art the Meſſiah, the expected Prophet, that was to come into the world. His being " the Son of the living God" was peculiar to him, in this reſpect only, that he was highly favoured in having a divine commiſſion given him; and deſerved the title in a more eminent degree than others, on account of his exemplary virtue, and perfect obedience to the will of God; for all good men are, in Scripture, ſtyled " Sons of God," though in a ſenſe inferior to that which is applied to Chriſt. Peter gave ſo juſt a deſcription of the perſon and character of Chriſt, that our Lord " an-
" ſwered, and ſaid unto him, Bleſſed art thou,
" Simon Barjona; for fleſh and blood hath not
" revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in
" Heaven; and I alſo ſay unto thee, that thou art
" Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my
" CHURCH, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail
" againſt it." That is, Happy are you, that you have formed this opinion of me, and have not taken it up lightly, or from mere report, but have concluded from conviction, that I could not have done the miracles which you have ſeen, or taught the doctrine

doctrine you have heard, if I had not been commiſſioned by my heavenly Father to fill the office, and anſwer the character you have aſcribed to me. And this I affirm to you, that the confeſſion of faith which you have now made, and the belief of this ſingle article, of my being the Meſſiah, is that fundamental truth, on which my religion ſhall be eſtabliſhed; and whatever may be the attempts of its enemies to prevent its reception in the world, it ſhall ſtill ſpread, and finally prevail over all oppoſition.

This is the evident meaning of the text. But as the uſe of words without clear and preciſe ideas annexed to them, gives occaſion to the groſſeſt errors, and the moſt material perverſion of the plaineſt things; and as this effect has been produced in no inſtance more remarkably than in the miſconception of what is really meant by the word *church*, I ſhall in the following diſcourſe conſider, Firſt, the ſcripture meaning of that term; and ſhall, Secondly, ſhew, that according to our Saviour's declaration, no danger can poſſibly befall it.

Firſt, The word "Church," in ſcripture, as well as in profane authors *(a)*, invariably means an "Aſ-

 ſembly."

(*a*) Εκκλησια, amongſt the Greeks, meant an Aſſembly, called together upon any public buſineſs, to enact laws, &c. Εβουλομην μεν αν, ω Αθηναιοι, τας Εκκλησιας υπο των εφεστηκοτων ορθως διοικεισθαι. Æſchines paſſim.—Θεων Εκκλησια, Deorum concilium, an Aſſembly of the Gods. Lucian.

ſembly." Wherever there was a number of Chriſtians, ſmall or great, collected together, that meeting was called "a church;" and it took its name from the perſons who aſſembled, not the place in which they met. Nor was it any particular order or deſcription of perſons amongſt them, but the whole body aſſembled, that conſtituted this "church." A few inſtances will ſerve to prove this. "Salute Priſcilla and Aquila, and the church which is in their houſe *(b)*:" which means a number of perſons profeſſing Chriſtianity in that particular houſe or family, and has no manner of relation to the place itſelf where they were aſſembled; but the perſons or family in it are ſtyled "the church." "No church communicated with me, but ye only *(c)*." The Apoſtle addreſſes himſelf to the Philippians, as "the church;" remarking the difference between their conduct towards him, and that of others. "Ye are come to the general *aſſembly*, and *church* of the firſt born *(d)*." Theſe terms are ſynonimous, and ſo they are tranſlated in two paſſages of the Acts. "The aſſembly was confuſed." "He diſmiſſed the aſſembly *(e)*;" which ſenſes could not be given to the

(b) Rom. xvi. 15.

(c) Phil. iv. 15.

(d) Heb. xii. 23.

(e) Acts xix. 32. 40. ἡ Εκκλησια συγκεχυμενη, απελυσε την Εκκλησιαν.

the word *church*, ſuppoſing it to have been the *place* of meeting. "If the whole church be come together in one place *(f)*;" that is, if all the chriſtians of a certain diſtrict be aſſembled together. Theſe and other inſtances in ſcripture oblige me to give this conſtruction to the word Εκκλησια. The *congregation*, and not the place, forms the idea of it.

As there was no particular place appointed for theſe meetings, ſo neither were there any perſons appointed to preſide, with any degree of power or authority, over the reſt; but a general equality prevailed amongſt them. They acknowledged no other ſuperior than Chriſt. He is ſtyled, "the Head of the Body, the Church *(g)*:" that is, the whole ſociety. And to ſhew the perfect equality that ſubſiſted between the members of it, they are all ſtyled brethren. "The Head of every man was Chriſt *(h)*." He had no other ſuperior in religious matters. The Apoſtles themſelves enjoyed no power but what related to their divine miſſion; the power of working miracles, of prophefying, and ſpeaking with tongues. And even theſe powers were imparted, by the Apoſtles, to all Chriſtians in general, and were not confined to any particular order amongſt them. Stephen *(i)*, who was choſen by the congregation to the menial office of ſerving tables, preached,

 "and

(f) 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

(g) Coloſſ. i. 18.

(h) 1 Cor. xi. 3.

(i) Acts vi. 5. 8.

"and did great wonders and miracles among the people." The qualifications required of those who were to fill the most important offices in the church, were age, piety, and prudence; and as far as the powers of persuasion, example, and gravity could go, they might exercise them to the full: but supremacy and spiritual dominion they had none; and where the interests of the gospel were not immediately concerned, the Apostles and Elders had no more power than private christians. If an offence was committed by one christian against another, and the matter could not be settled privately, or by the friendly interference of one or two others, the church itself, that is, the whole assembly of christians, was consulted in the last resort *(k)*. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church." If he did not submit to this decision, he was excluded the society, which was the whole of their excommunication. The rules relating to this discipline, amounted to little more than a direction not to keep bad company; and the great bond of union which held this society together, was love and charity.

This is the account we have of the church which Christ established; which, for its piety and simplicity, may well deserve our admiration. And if a comparison were drawn between *it* and modern churches, the utility and advantages it possesses, above

(k) Matt. xvi. 17.

above those human institutions; nay, I had almost said, its direct opposition to them all, would be too conspicuous to be dissembled. There was no stress laid upon the place where christians should meet, nor any intimation given, that one sort of edifice was more proper than another to assemble in, for the worship of God; a peculiarity, which with some people enters very much into their idea of a true church, and of the efficacy of their prayers offered up in it. All were invited into it, without any discrimination of sect or party, Gentile as well as Jew. "Preach the gospel to every creature *(l)*," was the commission; and the terms were as plain: "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved." The conditions of admission into a church, at this time, are not so easy. Many things are required to be believed, which are not in the gospel, before a person is allowed to enter into it. It cannot therefore be "preached to every creature" in that unlimited degree it was ordered, as there are many who refuse to receive it, on account of those other articles of faith which have been superadded to it. There was no distinct order of men who had exclusively appropriated to themselves the denomination of the church, or what we now call the Clergy. But "unto every believer was given grace, according to "the measure of the gift of Christ *(m)*." In greater degree

(l) Mark xvi. 15. 16.

(m) Ephes. iv. 7. 11. 12. 1 Cor. xii. 7. 11.

degree indeed to ſome more than others; and for the ſole purpoſe "of perfecting the ſaints for the work "of the miniſtry, for the edification of the body of "Chriſt;" not to be lords over the faith of others, or to exerciſe a ſpiritual ſupremacy. We read indeed of Elders and Biſhops, or Overſeers, who were to inſpect the conduct of their chriſtian converts, and who, from their age, were fitteſt to add the force of example to the piety of their precepts. And theſe venerable teachers are deſcribed under the image of ſhepherds and guides; offices in themſelves low and humble, but ſanctified by the uſe they were to make of them; which was to ſecure their followers from error, and lead them into the way of truth; not to blind their eyes and ſhut out the light of their underſtandings, and then make them believe that they were in the right path. The Apoſtles, and firſt preachers, undertook a burthen, not an office of power and authority; they were better and poorer than other people, not their lords and maſters. The officers which are now ſuppoſed neceſſary to conſtitute a church, vaſtly exceed thoſe of the primitive one in number, and fall as much ſhort of them in point of utility *(n)*. Nor was the diſcipline of the church

(n) In our common idea of the Engliſh church, the body of the people is hardly included. It is ſuppoſed to conſiſt of the King, as ſupreme head; of Archbiſhops,

church of Chrift exercifed with any feverity. "The delivery of men over to Satan *(o)*," was by no means a configning them to the punifhment of the damned in the next world, after having tortured them to death in this. Amendment, not their deftruction, was the object. It was done, that they "might learn" not "to fpeak ill" of religion, which was of fo holy a nature as not to admit a bad man into it. And thefe perfons whom the Apoftle fpeaks of, were of the moft abandoned caft; apoftates; men who had both facrificed their faith and confcience, and become fuch a difgrace to their calling, that they were fit only to affociate with the profligate and immoral; with thofe who were "enemies" to the gofpel, and its greateft "oppofers." "This deliver-"ing over to Satan," is very different from delivering over to the civil magiftrate and the executioner; and if they had not "made fhipwreck of a good confcience" *(p)*, as well as their "faith," they would not have been treated as bad men, but as mistaken

bifhops, Bifhops, Priefts, Deacons, Deans, Archdeacons, Convocations, Chancellors, Treafurers, Præcentors, Prebendaries, Canons, Petty Canons, Rectors, Vicars, Curates, Chaplains, Chorifters, Organifts, Parifh Clerks, Vergers, Sextons, &c. Vide Robertfon's Attempt to explain the words Reafon, Subftance, &c. p. 171.

(o) 1 Tim. i. 19. 20. *(p)* 1 Tim. i. 19.

taken ones. The infliction of tortures, and death, in all its hideous forms, for a want of faith, in what reason cannot comprehend, or for entertaining a doubt about the authority which imposes such a belief, was a refinement in cruelty reserved for later ages of the church. The apostles and first christians had learned a better lesson from their master, "who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them *(q)*." And this he said, when his disciples wanted him "to call down *fire* from heaven" to consume those *dissenters* and *heretics*, the Samaritans *(r)*: he told them "they knew not what the true spirit of their religion was;" that it breathed nothing but love and charity, and embraced all mankind as brethren; and that no difference of worship, or of religious opinion, ought to abate their good will, or lessen their good actions, one towards another.

Having considered the scripture meaning of the word "church," I shall secondly shew, that, according to our Saviour's declaration, no "danger" can possibly befall it.

Had all other churches been built with the same materials with the "church of Christ," there would never have been any complaint about their decay, or apprehensions for their fall. That Jesus was the "Christ," "the Son of the living God," was the "rock upon which the church of Christ was built." It

(q) Luke ix. 57. *(r)* Luke ix. 54.

It has withſtood the ravages of time, the violence of the floods, and the fury of the ſtorms that have beaten upon it; and nothing has been able to ſhake it, for it was founded upon a "rock (*s*)." Other churches have ſince been ſaid to be conſtructed upon this model; but the danger they are now in, from the decayed ſtate of them, plainly proves that they were built upon a very different foundation. The Apoſtle tells us, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid," which is "Jeſus Chriſt." Now it is certain, an attempt has been made to lay a very different foundation, and to build upon it. Several other propoſitions, quite contrary to chriſtianity, and deſtructive of it, are deemed its fundamental truths; but as they are neither agreeable to reaſon, nor the word of God, it cannot be expected they ſhould have his power or ſanction to ſupport them. The foundation that is laid by the "Apoſtles and Prophets" will remain firm and unmoveable; but "if any man "build upon this foundation, wood, hay, ſtubble, "his work ſhall be made manifeſt; the day ſhall "declare it, becauſe it ſhall be revealed by fire, and "the fire ſhall try every man's work of what ſort it "is (*t*)." Wherever the fictions of men ſhall be ſubſtituted for the word of God, or a motley mixture of abſurd and unſcriptural doctrines ſhall be ſuperadded to it, it ſhall plainly appear "whoſe work it is."

(*s*) Luke vi. 48. (*t*) 1 Cor. iii. 11. 12. 13.

is." Revelation and myſtery, light and darkneſs, are ſo oppoſite to each other, that if men are ſuffered to uſe their reaſon and ſenſes, they never can be under a miſtake about them; and when once they ſhall exerciſe their faculties in the ſearch after truth, and bring their opinions to their only teſt, the ſcriptures, then will come the fiery trial to the hay, wood, and ſtubble; to the whole fabric of error, which has been building for ages, and will paſs away like a viſion. Such an antichriſtian church as this, muſt ever be *in danger*; and no wonder that the members of it are in ſuch conſtant alarms about it. If any worldly power could procure it aid, it has every ſecurity which that can give. Large revenues are allotted to its defence, and every allurement held out to thoſe who will engage in its ſervice. It is guarded by reſtrictions, fenced in by pains and penalties, and is by LAW ESTABLISHED. With all theſe ſupports, ſtill it is *in danger*, and ever crying out for help. Sure this betrays ſome very great weakneſs within, as it is ſo well defended from without! Great is the power of the civil magiſtrate, but no power can make a propoſition true, which is in itſelf falſe; or maintain, by force, the reaſonableneſs of injudicious laws. He may ſilence the voice of truth, but is not able wholly to *ſtifle* it. He may bribe men to *profeſs* the groſſeſt contradiction, but no authority can inſiſt upon their *believing* it. Moſt human eſtabliſhments of religion have been pro-

ductive of ſloth, ignorance, and hypocriſy in its profeſſors; cramping the beſt faculties of the mind, and enſlaving it to prieſtcraft and folly. The religion of Chriſt ſtands in no need of ſuch aſſiſtance, and can ſupport itſelf by its own ſtrength, and its own evidences. It not only made its way in the world, at its firſt promulgation, without the aid of the civil power, but in oppoſition to it; and this at a time when it was preached by a few poor, friendleſs, and illiterate fiſhermen. Theſe firſt preachers had no rewards to diſtribute, no honours to beſtow; nothing to intereſt their followers, or retain them in their cauſe. On the contrary, bonds, impriſonment, and death, were their certain portion. Yet notwithſtanding all theſe diſcouragements, they went forth to the conflict, with no other armour than truth, and no other comfort than a good conſcience. With theſe, in a ſhort time, they overcame the prejudices of the Jews, the idolatry of the Gentiles, and effected a revolution in religion, when every power in this world was combined to cruſh it. Could natural means have produced ſo ſudden and ſo wonderful a convulſion? No; the ſame power that firſt gave riſe to chriſtianity, continued to ſupport it. But it has met with oppoſition, not only from open enemies, but falſe friends: and the latter have done it more diſſervice than the former; under pretence of what they have called eſtabliſhing, they have helped to undermine it, and deſtroy its efficacy; and in order

to improve what was already perfect, they have added ſuch errors and corruptions as are a ſcandal and diſgrace to it. And as men are fonder of their own inventions than they are of truth, they have guarded theſe fictions with more care and jealouſy, than they have the vital principles of the goſpel. Theſe unſubſtantial doctrines being in danger from the weakeſt attack, the approach to them is diligently watched, and no leſs rigorous injunctions given to prevent a ſurpriſe, than were by Moſes to the Iſraelites, to keep them from Mount Sinai: "Thou "ſhalt ſet bounds unto the people, round about, "ſaying, Take heed to yourſelves, that ye go not up "into the Mount, or touch the border of it; whoſo-"ever ſhall touch the Mount ſhall be *ſurely put to* "*death* (*v*)." Thus expoſed as chriſtianity has been to the aſſaults of its open enemies, and the miſ-guided zeal of its falſe friends; it has ſtill ſurmounted all difficulties, has even gained ſtrength by oppoſition, and proved the truth of our Saviour's prediction, "that the gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it."

From what has been ſaid, theſe concluſions naturally follow:

Firſt, Before we complain of the church being *in danger*, we ſhould conſider well what church we mean. If it be the "church of Chriſt," our fears are vain; for we are aſſured by our Lord himſelf, no

(*v*) Exod. xix. 12.

no danger ſhall befall it. But if we be anxious for any other church, our fears are too well founded; and there is no way to remove them, but by making it as like the former as poſſible, both in diſcipline and doctrine; and holding the ſame confeſſion of faith, which was ſo much applauded by our Saviour; which was only this, "That Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of the living God."

Secondly, As Chriſt declared, that "his kingdom was not of this world," it is impoſſible that "his church" can form any alliance with it. It muſt be a wonderful converſion, and a long time muſt elapſe before that great prophecy will be fulfilled, "when the kingdoms of this world ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Chriſt *(x)*." Hitherto there has been ſo little agreement between them, that as well might there be "a concord of Chriſt with Belial," or truth with fable, as a junction formed betwixt them. For, ſo unlike is the "faith once delivered to the ſaints," to that which Conſtantine enjoined, that if any thing could have ruined chriſtianity, it was the eſtabliſhment of what paſſed under that name by the powers of this world. It is an inſult to ſuppoſe, that divine power can ſtand in need of human aid.

Laſtly, The trueſt Friends to the church are thoſe who would reſtore it to its original purity and ſimplicity. That "being rooted and built up in a

(x) Rev. xi. 15.

" holy faith" they may " preſent it a glorious " church, not having ſpot, or wrinkle, or any ſuch " thing, but be holy and without blemiſh *(y)*." And when this is done, and not before, it may bid defiance to every enemy, and aſſure itſelf, " that the " gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it."

To the King eternal, immortal, inviſible, the only wiſe God, be aſcribed honour and glory now and for ever!

(y) Coloſſ. ii. 7.

THE

SCRIPTURE IDEA

OF

HERESY.

ACTS xxiv. 14. 15. 16.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call Heresy, *so worship I the* God of my fathers, *believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men.*

IT was the fate of christianity itself, at its first promulgation, to be branded with the name of *heresy*; and its preacher, St. Paul, was called the great *heresiarch*, "a ringleader of the *heresy* of the Nazarenes," for so the term should be translated in the 5th, as it is in the 14th verse of this chapter.

The word *Heresy*, in the original, is in itself a term of no criminal import. It means no more than a *choice*; as when different religious opinions are proposed to the mind, it "*chooses*" and embraces those which appear most true and convincing. According to this interpretation, there can be nothing wrong,

wrong, or criminal, in herefy; it being nothing more than the exercife of the mind upon fubjects which deferve moft to employ it. Nor do we find, that it had an ill name given to it, in fcripture, but when accompanied with vice, and when opinions were maintained, more for the purpofe of juftifying wickednefs than the fupport of truth.

The Pharifees, among the Jews, were a religious fect, or herefy; and though many individuals of this profeffion were juftly branded by our Lord, with the title of "hypocrites;" though they held the tradition of the elders, and rejected the commandments of God; yet, notwithftanding, we find an example of a virtuous character declaring himfelf a member of this fufpicious community; and informing us, that after the ftraiteft fect (herefy) of the Jewifh religion he lived a Pharifee. (Acts xxvi. 5.) The Sadducees formed another fect, whofe general tenor of practice and converfation was nearly as reprehenfible as that of the former. Thefe heretics are frequently claffed together; and the difciples of Chrift are warned againft the doctrine of both. But we may remark, that although the particular opinions of the Sadducees were of the moft dangerous nature, and fuch as ftruck at the root of all religion, by denying the refurrection of the dead; yet our Saviour, in his reafoning with them upon this fubject, only told them that they were miftaken, and that "they erred, not knowing;" that is, "not underftanding the

"fcriptures,

" ſcriptures, nor the power of God." He " denounces no woe" againſt them, as he frequently did againſt the Phariſees, for their hypocriſy; but " reaſons" with them out of the ſcriptures, and proves to them the truth of what they before had denied. This inſtance of lenity muſt have proceeded from a diſtinction which our Lord made, between a miſtake about the ſenſe and meaning of certain paſſages of ſcripture, and a breach of the plain and poſitive commands of God, where there could be no miſtake at all. And the treatment theſe heretics met with from our Lord, may ſerve as a leſſon to bigots and perſecutors. No hard names nor ill language were given them. They were not threatened with fines, confiſcations, and impriſonment, to make them retract their errors: but much likelier means were made uſe of; reaſon and argument; gentleneſs and good-nature. They were treated as men under a miſtake, whoſe errors might be involuntary; and the iſſues, perhaps, only of unfortunate inquiry. They might deſerve compaſſion, but not ill-uſage; for where there is no crime, there certainly ought to be no puniſhment.

In all other places of ſcripture where hereſy is ſpoken of with diſgrace, it is always on account of the evil practices, and not the opinions, of thoſe who were charged with it. In the epiſtle to the Galatians, (v. 20.) it is reckoned amongſt the

works

works of the flesh, "seditions, heresies *(a)*, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such like; and they who *do* such things, are told, "that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God." They were excluded from the kingdom of God, for the bad *actions* which they *did*, not the wrong opinions they maintained. St. Peter (1 Ep. ii. 1.) foretells, "that false teachers would come, who would bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." That they were not only apostates, but such as were sunk in the grossest vices, is plain from the description given of them in this chapter. The Apostle says, that many shall follow their *pernicious ways*, or lewd practices *(b)*: and that God will punish *them* for their wicked deeds, in the same remarkable manner as he did the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

St. Paul directs Titus (iii. 10.) "to reject a man, that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition:" and subjoins, as a reason for this proceeding,

(a) In this place it is possible the word may mean *parties in the state*, or, *in temporal matters*; as it is joined with *seditions*, or *dissentions*. Τȣ̃ς πολιτευομενȣ̃ς μεταθεσθαι προς την Ῥωμαιων ΑΙΡΕΣΙΝ. Polyb. apud Raphel. Gal. i. 6.

(b) Or *filthiness*; for many ancient copies, the King's MS. and that in Magdalen College, Oxford, read ασελγειας. Vide Hammond.

ceeding, "Knowing that he that is ſuch, is ſubverted, and ſinneth; being condemned of himſelf." This is the character of an immoral member of the chriſtian ſociety, who, by being conſcious of his having departed from the rules of it, muſt himſelf approve of the ſentence paſſed upon him. It has plainly this meaning and no other; for the Apoſtle, in the verſes before, had been recommending an exemplary behaviour in believers; that they ſhould be careful to excel all others *(c)* in good works, as ſuch a conduct would be uſeful and ſerviceable; but that fooliſh queſtions, and contentions, were unprofitable and vain; and that the heretic, whom he was to reject, was one, who was ſubverted, was turned out of the way *(d)*, wherein he ſhould have walked, and had ſinned, and ſo become a diſgrace to their ſociety, and ought to be expelled from it.

Thus it appears, that hereſy, according to the ſcripture notion, being not a pure miſtake of judgment, but an embracing of doctrine known to be falſe by thoſe who eſpouſe it, out of diſguſt, pride, or envy, or from worldly principles, or to avoid perſecution, or trouble in the fleſh, may be well ranked among

(c) Καλων εργων προεισθαι, præeſſe, *to be at the head of* good works, προισασθαι των πραγμαλων—της ηγεμονιας. Demoſth.

(d) Εξεςραπλαι.

among carnal lufts. Hence, are fuch men faid, "not to ferve Jefus Chrift, but their belly, (Rom. xvi. 18.) to teach what they ought not, for filthy lucre's fake (Tit. i. 11.) to account gain for godlinefs (1 Tim. vi. 5.) and through covetoufnefs, with feigned words, to make merchandize of others." (2 Pet. ii. 3.) And therefore the Apoftle doth not advife us to convince, but only to admonifh, and reject the heretic, as knowing that he fins, being convicted by his own confcience (*e*). And where herefy is not taken up to ferve bad purpofes, and bad paffions, and is not perfifted in from a fpirit of pride, ftrife, and contention, but from a laudable oppofition to grofs errors, and bad practices: there it is fpoken of with commendation in the holy fcriptures. St. Paul, hearing of fome divifions in the church of Corinth, about the celebration of the Lord's fupper, writes to them to prevent the irregularities of behaviour which had taken place there; and tells them that thofe who had a proper fenfe of their duty, and that facred ordinance, fhould withdraw themfelves from fuch as had not: that by thus forming themfelves into a felect and feparate body, they might obferve fuch order and decency as would be rendered confpicuous to all the reft: that fingularity in a good caufe was a virtue, and that they ought to be proud of a diftinction, when any good might be gained by it.

(*e*) See Whitby on Gal. v. 19. quoted Jebb's Works, ii. 148.

it. "For there *muſt* be even *hereſies*," ſays he, "amongſt you, that they, which are approved," that is, men of approved virtue, and who will ſtand the teſt, "may be made manifeſt among you." And that this never could be done, but by forming a ſeparation, and oppoſing good example to bad, in order to put a ſtop to the abuſes complained of. Here the heretics were the beſt part of the congregation: not the leading party, who had behaved amiſs; from whom the conſcientious were ordered to divide and ſeparate, that they might manifeſt their integrity.

Having examined the word "hereſy," and ſeen in what ſenſe it is uſed in ſcripture, we are not to wonder that St. Paul was not at all ſtartled at being charged with it. They had not yet begun to fulminate anathemas againſt thoſe who dared to think for themſelves, nor were the terrors of an inquiſition held out to ſuch obſtinate offenders. This intolerance was reſerved for a later age. So long as our apoſtle knew that the Jews could prove nothing criminal againſt him, and his conſcience told him that he had been guilty of no offence, either againſt God or man, he held in contempt their accuſation of being a ringleader of the hereſy of the Nazarenes; and with a ſpirit and courage, that truth and innocence inſpires, openly declared to the Roman governors, that if to be a chriſtian was an heretic, an heretic certainly he was; but adds, that his accuſers were not aware,

that by making him one, they had in a great meafure included themfelves under the fame predicament. "For, fays he, after the way which they call *herefy*, fo worfhip I the God of my fathers." No *new object* of worfhip is introduced; the *fame* common parent of mankind; the *fame almighty Being*, to whom our nation owes fuch diftinguifhed marks of favour and protection. He is equally the God of *Chriftians* and of Jews; and all that he requires of either is, "that they fhould worfhip him in fpirit and in truth." Whatfoever is written in the law, and the prophets, is equally the object of the faith of both; and the expectation which the Jews indulge, of a refurrection of the dead, and a future recompence of reward; the fame hope is the bafis of a chriftian's creed, and the *diftinguifhing* article of his religion; that in this latter inftance, the difference did not refpect the object but the degree of faith: for what the one only hoped for, as relying upon the goodnefs of God, the other was fully affured of, by his having raifed up Chrift from the dead.

This was St. Paul's confeffion of faith, which he made before the Roman governors, upon a charge of herefy brought againft him by the Jews. It was thought a full and fatisfactory defence by the civil power, and ought to have filenced his accufers, if piety, worth, and virtue could have expiated the offence of differing from them in opinion. It is a fhort formulary of faith, which the apoftle has given

us; it consists of but few articles, and those very plain and intelligible: no one who maintains the doctrines contained in it, ought to be charged with heresy, according to the modern acceptation of the term; and if he is, he may shelter himself under the name and authority of St. Paul, who very frankly confessed, that what his enemies styled heretical, he considered as the true religion. And what this is, it is well worth our remarking. First, Christianity has made no alteration in the object of divine worship. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is *one* Lord," is a truth equally insisted on by the christian as well as jewish lawgiver. Our Saviour, in answer to the scribe, says, that the *first* of all the commandments was that which related to the *unity* of the Supreme Being: and as this was one of the first precepts of the moral law, his declaration concerning it, confirms and ratifies the truth of it; for he came not, he said, to relax their duty in this respect, but to strengthen, and give weight to their former obligations. It is on this foundation that the apostle Paul builds the faith of a christian: "To us, says he, there is but *one God*, the *Father*," whom, in another place, he styles "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father* of glory." The unity, and supremacy of God, is a truth of that magnitude and importance, that the whole jewish dispensation was framed to establish it. To imagine that another dispensation, or what indeed was only an extension of

the former, ſhould unſettle, or undo, what was the original and grand deſign of it, is to aſcribe weakneſs and uncertainty to him "with whom is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning." This is a truth which falls in with our firſt and natural conception of things; is what reaſon loudly proclaims, from the apparent unity of deſign throughout all the works of God; and is an idea which never can be wholly ſhut out of the mind, till it has been debauched by metaphyſical jargon, and the refinements of falſe philoſophy. Predicting the errors of an apoſtate church, the prophet Daniel *(f)* informs us, that an heathen potentate (the Roman emperor) ſhould forſake the objects of his father's worſhip; ſhould adopt *a ſtrange God*, expreſsly diſtinguiſhed from the God of Gods, a God unknown to his heathen anceſtors though as far as related to divine adoration, equally an idol with what they had before worſhipped; and honour him, not in ſpirit and in truth, but with gold, and with ſilver, and with precious ſtones, and pleaſant things. This is adding to, or ſubſtituting another deity inſtead of that God who made heaven and earth, the God of Jeſus and of Paul, whom alone men ought to worſhip, and expreſsly contradicts the command of both covenants.

The

(f) Dan. xi. 36. 38. See Commentaries and Eſſays publiſhed by the Society for promoting the knowledge of the Scriptures. Vol. i. p. 486.

The next truth of importance we learn from St. Paul's defence, is a belief in the holy ſcriptures, and that fundamental article which is there found, a reſurrection of the dead; it is to this that the law and the prophets evidently point, viz. to the coming of the Meſſiah, and the doctrine he ſhould deliver. And what is it that he principally teaches us? Why, that he has brought life and immortality to light, through the goſpel. It was this truth that the apoſtle principally urges in his diſcourſes. He ſays, "that he was commanded to preach unto the people, and to teſtify, that Chriſt was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead; to whom gave all the prophets witneſs, that through his name whoſoever believeth in him, ſhall receive the remiſſion of ſins." And in another place, "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." In expectation of this great event, and preparatory to it, we are taught in the goſpel, "to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in the preſent world, looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt."

To conclude: A belief in one God, in the truth of the holy ſcriptures, and in a judgment to come, is the ſubſtance of a chriſtian's creed. To fabricate any other doctrines, and make them of equal importance with theſe, is to leſſen the authority and

ſufficiency of the ſcriptures; and to require belief to theſe ſupplementary doctrines, whether it is done by the mandate of the pope, or any other perſon, is to exerciſe a power, which no perſon has a right to, and which a proteſtant would diſown and reſiſt, referring the deciſion of the diſpute to a higher authority, to the bible, as his only rule of faith; and if branded as a heretic for ſo doing, he would not deny the charge, but boldly confeſs, "that after the way which they called hereſy, ſo worſhipped he the God of his fathers, believing all things which are written in the holy ſcriptures; and that he had hope towards God, that there would be a reſurrection of the dead, both of the juſt and the unjuſt." And if this confeſſion of faith did not ſatisfy his accuſers, it would himſelf, provided he "always exerciſed himſelf, to have a conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards men."

To the King eternal, immortal, inviſible, God only wiſe, be aſcribed all honour, power, might, majeſty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever!

MYSTERIES MADE PLAIN.

PREACHED AT SPROUGHTON

ON TRINITY SUNDAY,

JUNE 19, 1791.

EPHES. vi. 19. 20.

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the Myſtery of the Goſpel, for which I am an Ambaſſador in bonds, that therein I may ſpeak boldly as I ought to ſpeak.

IT has long been a received opinion, that there are certain *Myſteries* in the Chriſtian religion, ſo far above human comprehenſion, that it would be in vain to enquire into their meaning; and ſo ſacred and ſublime, that it would be profane even to attempt it.

That theſe are very different from the myſteries which we read of in the ſcriptures is certain: for the latter are always ſpoken of as things capable of explanation, and which are all actually explained: nor do the ſacred writers condemn an inquiry into their meaning, as an unlawful and unbecoming curioſity; but aſſert the contrary, and conſider it as the duty of a chriſtian miniſter "to *make them known*," and divulge them. St. Paul wanted only

"*liberty*

"*liberty of ſpeech (a)* to unfold "*the myſteries of the goſpel*," and ſhew the reaſonableneſs of it; and perhaps all that is now wanted, is the ſame liberty to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of all other *myſteries* which are *not* in the goſpel.

I ſhall, in the following diſcourſe, Firſt, endeavour to prove, that there are *no myſteries* in the goſpel but ſuch as are revealed.

And, Secondly, that when chriſtianity is ſaid to be *myſterious*, the true nature of it is miſrepreſented.

Firſt, In thoſe inſtances where our Lord couched his meaning under figurative expreſſions, and intended that his diſciples only ſhould comprehend the full import of what he ſaid, he uſes the word myſtery as ſynonimous to parable, as appears from St. Mark, and the parallel places *(b)*. "Unto you it is given to *know* the *myſtery* of the kingdom of God;" which is afterwards explained, by his ſaying, "*Know ye not* this *parable (c)?*

But in the writings of the apoſtles, the word is generally applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church and kingdom of God: an event which the Jews had no conception of; as they imagined that the partial favours of Heaven were to be confined to their own nation, and that, from long preſcription,

(a) Παῤῥησια.

(b) Mark iv. 11. Matt. xiii. 11. Luke viii. 10.

(c) Mark iv. 13.

ſcription, they had an excluſive right to them *(d)*. But this myſtery or ſecret, which had lain *hid*, in the councils of God, the apoſtles "*made known*," and proclaimed to the world. A few inſtances will evince this.

St. Paul ſays (*e*), that "God had by revelation "*made known* unto him the myſtery, of which he "had written before in few words, whereby they "might underſtand his *knowledge* in the myſtery of "Chriſt; which, in other ages, was not made "known unto the ſons of men, as it was then re-"vealed unto his holy apoſtles and prophets by the "ſpirit

(d) The firſt and leading ſenſe of μυστηριον, ſays the learned Dr. Campbell, "is not that of the Engliſh word "*myſtery*, i. e. ſomething incomprehenſible by reaſon, but "*arcanum*, a ſecret. It is adopted by the Septuagint as a "term ſtrictly correſponding with the Chaldaic רזא *res* "*arcana*. Nor is it confined to divine ſecrets. St. Paul tells "us, that the myſtery of iniquity doth already work; i. e. "the ſpirit of antichriſt hath begun to operate, but the "operation is latent and unperceived. The goſpel of "Chriſt is denominated a myſtery, not becauſe it contains "any thing in its own nature dark and incomprehenſible, "but becauſe it treats of ſomething that had been con-"cealed for ages, but which was at length openly re-"vealed." Vide Eſſays Philoſophical, Hiſtorical, and Literary, 1ſt vol. p. 431.

(e) Epheſ. iii. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 9. 10.

"ſpirit; *That the gentiles ſhould be fellow-heirs*, and "of the *ſame body*, and *partakers* of his *promiſe in* "*Chriſt*, by the *goſpel*; whereof he was made a mi-"niſter, that he ſhould preach among the gentiles "the unſearchable *riches* of *Chriſt*. And to make "*all men* ſee, what is the *fellowſhip of the myſtery*, "which from the beginning of the world hath been "*hid* in God, to the intent that *now* might be "*known*, by the church, the manifold wiſdom of "God."

In another place *(f)*, the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks of "*this myſtery*, which had been *hid* from ages, and "from generations, but then was *made manifeſt* to his "ſaints; to whom God would *make known* what "are the riches of the glory of this *myſtery among the* "*gentiles*."

Again, in his epiſtle to the Romans (*g*), he ſays, "I would not, brethren, that *ye ſhould be ignorant* "of this myſtery; that blindneſs in part is happened "to Iſrael, until the *fulneſs of the gentiles* be come in." And referring to the ſame matter, in the cloſe of the ſame epiſtle (*h*), he ſpeaks of "the myſtery which "was kept *ſecret* ſince the world began, but *then* "was made *manifeſt*, and, by the ſcriptures of the "prophets, according to the commandment of the "everlaſting God, *made known* to *all nations*, for the "obedience of faith."

The

(*f*) Coloſſ. i. 26. 27. (*g*) Rom. xi. 25.
(*h*) Rom. xvi. 25. 26.

The myſteries here ſpoken of were neither abſtruſe nor unintelligible; their *hidden* meaning was not reſerved for the "*initiated*," and withheld from the "*profane;*" nor were they conſidered as ſpeculations proper to employ the learned, and keep the vulgar in awe. But they were plain, and level to every capacity (*i*). The apoſtle ſpeaks of his *own knowledge* in the *myſtery of Chriſt;* and deſires *that all his brethren* might be as great "*adepts*" in it as himſelf (*k*). They had a moral and practical uſe; were *made known* for the *obedience* of *faith* (*l*), not to exerciſe their faith *only;* to promote piety and virtue, not wrangling and diſputation.

In all other places of ſcripture, when the word myſtery is uſed, without any particular alluſion to the calling of the gentiles, it ſignifies the power, mercy, and goodneſs of God, vouchſafed to the whole race of mankind, and wonderfully diſplayed in the diſpenſation of the goſpel; a bleſſing ſo inconceivably great and unexpected, that it might well appear myſterious, till the whole plan of it was laid open and fully made known.

Thus, in that paſſage of St. Paul (*m*), "Without "controverſy, great is the myſtery of godlineſs; "God

(*i*) Epheſ. iii. 4. (*k*) Rom. xi. 25. (*l*) Ib. xvi. 25. 26.

(*m*) 1 Tim. iii. 16. But the true meaning of 1 Tim. iii. 16. is, according to many old verſions, and the opinion of Sir Iſaac Newton, μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον

"God was made manifeſt in the fleſh." It does not mean that God himſelf was viſible in the perſon of Chriſt; this would not have been a myſtery, but an impoſſibility: "For no man hath ſeen God at "any time, nor *can* ſee him (*n*)." But it ſignifies, that the power, mercy, and goodneſs of God, which is all that we can know of him, were rendered conſpicuous in the perſon of Chriſt, who was the agent and inſtrument of the Almighty, in his beneficent deſigns towards the children of men; ſo that the Supreme Being might be ſaid to be *manifeſted*, when he made known his will to Chriſt, and gave him power and authority to execute it; and is what our Lord repeatedly declares: "My doctrine is not "mine, but his that ſent me (*o*)." "I can, *of* "*mine own ſelf*, do nothing (*p*)." Again, when ſpeaking of the reſurrection of the dead, and the great and ſudden change which our bodies were to undergo, St. Paul ſays, "Behold I ſhew you a myſtery:" (1 Cor. xv. 51.) i. e. I make known to you a circumſtance, relating to an event, the particulars of which you before were unacquainted with.

And to put it paſt doubt that all the myſteries of the goſpel came within the province of reaſon and common

μυστηριον ὁ εφανερωθη εν σαρκι. *That which* was manifeſt, ὁ, *id quod*, i. e. the myſtery, that ſeries of events diſcloſed by the goſpel.

(*n*) John i. 18. 1 Tim vi. 16.

(*o*) John vii. 16. (*p*) John v. 30.

common apprehenſion of mankind, he ſuppoſes a caſe where all of them are brought together, and yet poſſible to be conceived: "Though I *underſtand all myſteries* and all *knowledge (q)*;" i. e. every thing that relates to the diſpenſation of the goſpel, and a proper ability to preach it. Here it is obſervable that *myſtery* and *knowledge* go hand in hand, a connection peculiar to thoſe of the goſpel: in all others they are very wide aſunder; for the *leſs* the *knowledge*, the *greater* the *myſtery*; till the proportion being not at all kept up between them, knowledge is wholly loſt and ſunk in the labyrinths and abyſs of myſtery.

Theſe inſtances adduced from the ſcripture will ſuffice to prove, that there are no *myſteries* in the goſpel but ſuch as are *revealed*; that they relate in general to the calling of the Gentiles to partake of God's mercy in the goſpel; that they did not conſiſt of abſtruſe and contradictory propoſitions, of ſo wonderful a nature as to confound the reaſon and ſtagger the faith of the believer, but plain and important truths, containing an account of God's will *made known* to mankind by the preaching of Chriſt and his apoſtles.

Which leads me, ſecondly, to conſider, That when the goſpel is ſaid to be myſterious, the true nature of it is miſrepreſented.

(q) 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

It is not without good reaſon that the ſcripture always repreſents it under the image of *light*, as "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (*r*)." "I am the *light* of the world (*s*)," ſays our Lord; "He that followeth "me, ſhall not walk in *darkneſs*, but ſhall have "the light of life (*t*)." Chriſtians are ſaid to be "*children of light*, and of the day (*u*);" and they are told "to *believe* in the *light* (*x*)." What can theſe ſtrong expreſſions mean, but that the goſpel propoſes ſo plain and clear a rule of faith that it cannot be miſtaken by thoſe who will uſe the faculties which God has given them, that it is as obvious to the reaſon of mankind as light is to the eyes? Indeed, ſo clear is it repreſented that, emphatically ſpeaking, it is ſtyled *light itſelf*. And it was wiſely and beneficently ordered, by the Almighty, that the goſpel ſhould be thus plain and intelligible; as it was intended for general uſe, and more particularly for the poor and illiterate (*y*). Any thing intricate or abſtruſe would have ill-ſuited their capacities, who are not to be inſtructed by abſtract propoſitions, but ſelf-evident truths: It was therefore meant to ſerve as a clear and practical rule of life—not a ſtandard for doubtful diſputations, or ſpeculative

(*r*) John i. 9. (*s*) Ib. viii. 12. (*t*) Luke xvi. 8.
(*u*) 1 Theſſ. v. 5. (*x*) John xii. 36.
(*y*) Matt. xi. 5. Luke iv. 18.

ſpeculative opinions. It is for this reaſon that St. Paul ſays, "If the goſpel be hid, it is hid to them "that are loſt, in whom the God of this world hath "blinded the minds of them which believe not, "leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who "is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them." Vice and wickedneſs are enemies to all reformation, and the light ſhines in vain upon thoſe who wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt its brightneſs. That the doctrines of it perfectly agree with this deſcription, and are as plain as they are important, will appear from a ſhort review of them.

The firſt great deſign was to call men's attention to the true object of worſhip, and the duty which he requires of them; and it expreſsly teaches, "the only true God" is "the Father (z);" and that he is to be worſhipped "in ſpirit and in truth (a)."

Mankind was almoſt wholly ſunk in vice as well as ignorance: the goſpel was therefore a ſummons to them "to repent (b)," and return to their duty, to their heavenly Father; to reclaim them from ſin and wickedneſs, to a life of holineſs and virtue; and to aſſure them of pardon and forgiveneſs, upon their converſion and amendment (c).

And, as an encouraging motive to perſeverance in well-doing, the promiſe of eternal life is held forth

 to

(z) John xvii. 1, 3.
(a) Ib. iv. 23.
(b) Mark vi. 12.
(c) Acts iii. 19.

to them as a reward of their obedience (*d*). This doctrine of a resurrection, and future judgment, before but obscurely known, was plainly discovered and *brought* to *light* by the *gospel* (*e*);" and the evidence given of it, by the resurrection of Christ, afforded the fullest assurance of the certainty of our own (*f*).

These are the *fundamental* doctrines of Christianity, in which there is nothing dark or *mysterious*; nothing that revolts the common reason or sense of mankind; nothing to provoke the scoffs of the infidel, or to give offence to the rational and true believer. But can the same be said of that form of religion, which has been falsely exhibited under the name of Christianity; which has involved the plainest truths in *mystery*, and, instead of affording *light*, has led to more than *Egyptian darkness*; that has increased the merit of faith, in proportion to the weakness of its credibility; and requires that men should cease to be reasonable creatures, in order to become religious ones? What a perversion of the gospel is this, to turn what is there called a *revelation*, into an inscrutable *mystery*, and to make what is unintelligible, a criterion of the true faith! But this comes by introducing doctrines, and modes of belief, which we shall in vain look for in the scripture; and when once brought in, the advocates for them

(*d*) John v. 29. Rom. ii. 7.

(*e*) 2 Tim. i. 10. (*f*) 2 Cor. iv. 14.

them, in order to give them greater credit, have always repreſented to the people, that the very being and eſſence of Chriſtianity depended upon them; when neither the doctrines, nor the terms by which they expreſs them, have any place in the ſacred writings, but evidently came in with the heathen philoſophers, upon their converſion; who were fonder of making a ſhew of their learning, than of their religion. Thus, for want of acquieſcing in what the Almighty has been pleaſed to reveal of himſelf and his will, Chriſtianity has appeared in ſuch a dreſs as has entirely diſguiſed her; and an intricate artificial Theology has been ſubſtituted for the pure and plain word of God.

Having ſhewn from the ſcripture, that there are no myſteries in the goſpel but ſuch as are revealed; and that when it is ſaid to be myſterious, the true nature of it is miſrepreſented; I ſhall make a few reflections upon what has been ſaid, and conclude.

Firſt. It was St. Paul's opinion, That "to *make known* the *myſteries* of the *goſpel*, was all that was neceſſary to gain it a reception in the world.

And if *all other myſteries* were as capable of a rational explanation as thoſe of the goſpel, the principal objection now made againſt it would be removed.

He thought, too, that liberty of ſpeech was the only means of advancing the truth; and that to diſcuſs freely the myſteries of the goſpel, was the duty of

of a chriſtian miniſter; that *he* ſhould *open his mouth boldly*, and explain them all; which was as much as to ſay, that there were none in it, or at leaſt none that did not admit of the plaineſt interpretation; a declaration which no one ſhould be afraid of making, though the ſame fate awaited him that did the apoſtle, and he ſhould *be in bonds* likewiſe. It is ſuperſtition only that wants the ſupport of penal laws. Truth is ever a gainer by diſcuſſion and free enquiry.

Secondly. Thoſe who maintain that the moſt ſacred and fundamental parts of Chriſtianity are *myſterious* and *incomprehenſible*, cannot help acknowledging, that where theſe characters are found, there the eſſentials are preſerved which conſtitute the idea of a *true church*. Thus the church of Rome itſelf, with all her corruptions, is entitled to this appellation, and with great juſtice too, as *ſhe* had a prior right to them, by having had the merit of introducing them before others did. But inſtead of priding themſelves upon theſe diſtinctions, they would all do well to conſider, whether, inſtead of their being marks of a *true church*, they are not the ſpecific tokens of an *antichriſtian one*. The prophet has given the leading feature in his deſcription of her, which is ſo prominent that it cannot be miſtaken: "Upon her forehead was a name written, "*Myſtery*, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." It was the foremoſt character in the liſt that led the way for all the other corruptions; and indeed

indeed what elſe can be expected from ſo great a perverſion of the human intellect, as to confound the ideas of the plaineſt things, and deface that reaſon, the image of God, with which both his word and his works are all of them ſtamped?

Laſtly. If unbelievers are ever to be brought to the acknowledgement of the truth, it muſt be by propoſing it in that plainneſs and ſimplicity with which we ſee it taught in the ſacred writings. It has been the inſiſting upon irrational doctrines, and unſcriptural modes of faith, as *neceſſary* to *ſalvation*, which has produced that infidelity we ſo often hear complained of. For the repreſenting, as the word of God, what appears to be unworthy of its divine author, is the only way to make the truth itſelf rejected, on account of the corruptions which are ſaid to be a part of it.

Whatever therefore renders religion more rational, renders it more credible; and an appeal to the reaſon and underſtanding of mankind, for the truth, excellence, and purity of the goſpel precepts, would do more towards recommending them to their belief and practice, than all the creeds and articles that ever were deviſed, not to convince, but to puzzle and perplex them.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT.

1 Tim. ii. 6.

Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

TO form just conceptions of the Supreme Being, and his moral perfections, is of the greatest importance to our religious conduct. When he is considered as the original cause and author of all good, he becomes the sole object of our love, adoration and praise; and we have every motive that can encourage us in the performance of our duty to him. But, if we divest him of the attributes of mercy and goodness, and consider him as partial in his favour, rigid in his decrees, and implacable in his nature; then fear takes place of love, and religion degenerates into superstition.

Under such impressions as these, many are led to believe, that the Deity could not have been rendered *propitious* to his sinful creatures, without the interference of some other being of equal dignity with himself, who gave full satisfaction to offended justice, and thus made way for mercy and forgiveness. And

it has been thought, that Chrift was that perfon, who, by interpofing, ftayed the wrath of heaven, and averted the impending punifhment; and that he did this by becoming a *facrifice*, and fuffering in *their room*, that by his death he might *expiate* their offences, and pay the price of that *ranfom* which alone could *redeem* them from fin and mifery.

Thefe mifapprehenfions and unworthy notions of the Supreme Being proceed from attending to the found, rather than the fenfe, of fcripture; and adhering to a literal meaning, where the writer intended a figurative one fhould be underftood. But the words preceding the text will admit of no misconftruction, and inform us, that *God himfelf* is the prime and original author of our falvation, and is therefore emphatically ftyled *our Saviour (a)*; who, from no other confideration but his own fole mercy and goodnefs, was defirous *(b)* "that *all men* fhould be faved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth;" and that the "*one God (c)*" and Father of all appointed "*the man Chrift Jefus (d)* as the medium through whom his merciful defigns were to be conveyed, and "his will *(e)*" made known to the fons of men; which "mediator," and inftrument, after having *devoted* his life to the fervice of God, and

(a) 1 Tim. ii. 3. *(b)* 1 Tim. ii. 4.
(c) 1 Tim. ii. 5. *(d)* 1 Tim. ii. 5.
(e) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

and the good of mankind, closed the last scene of it, by sealing the truth of his divine mission with his blood. By thus dying in the cause of truth and virtue, he left a *(f) testimony to his own times*, which afforded the fullest conviction of it; according to the figurative language of the text, "He gave himself a ransom (g) for all, to be testified in due time." That is, his death was a confirmation of that gospel, the doctrines of which, if obeyed, would *free*, and *set at liberty*, all those who were under the power and influence of *sin*, and restore them to the favour of God.

In the following discourse I shall, *first*, endeavour to prove, That all our spiritual blessings in the gospel are derived from the sole goodness, mercy, and favour of *God*, as the original cause and author of them. And,

Secondly, That those terms in scripture, which seem to imply the contrary, were well understood by the *Jews*, to whom alone they were addressed; and, as such, that they do not apply to *us*, unless we in-

 terpret

(f) μαρτυριον καιροις ιδιοις.

(g) λυτρον, αντιλυτρον, απολυτρωσις, words of similar import, and signifying *freedom* or *deliverance*; and is so translated, Heb. xi. 35. λυτροομαι—*to make free*, or *set at liberty*. Luke xxiv. 21. ἡμεις δε ηλπιζομεν ὁτι αυτος εστιν ὁ μελλων λυτρουσθαι τον Ισραηλ, make them free, or set them at liberty from the Roman yoke.

terpret their meaning in the ſame figurative manner they did.

Firſt, That it is from God alone that we derive every bleſſing we enjoy, is a dictate of nature as well as revelation. The *works* of God univerſally proclaim this truth, and his *word* is in perfect harmony with it.

The characters under which the Almighty is conſtantly deſcribed in the Old Teſtament, are thoſe of a Being merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and *abundant in goodneſs* and truth (*h*).

The ſame are recorded in the New, though in more exalted ſtrains. St. Paul (*i*) "magnifies the *goodneſs* of God, who is rich in mercy, through his great love, wherewith he loved us;" and ſays, "the kindneſs and love of God our *Saviour towards man* appeared," in this reſpect, moſt conſpicuous, that it was not procured by our *righteous works*, but according to *his own mercy He* hath ſaved us (*k*). But St. John, not content with this deſcription, as falling ſhort of his idea of the divine benignity, ſtyles him *love itſelf* (*l*); and ſays, "that it was manifeſted in this inſtance by ſending his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him (*m*)."

Such clear and undiſputed paſſages of ſcripture ſufficiently eſtabliſh theſe important truths: "That God

(*h*) Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7.
(*i*) Eph. ii. 4.
(*k*) Tit. iii. 4. 5.
(*l*) 1 John iv. 8.
(*m*) 1 John iv. 9.

God is eſſentially, and in his own nature, *good.*" "That it is from his *own great love towards mankind* (*n*), that all the bleſſings of the goſpel are derived." "It was *his own mercy*, and no other, that hath *ſaved* us." It was the *love of God* that was manifeſted, by *ſending* Chriſt into the world, that we might obtain eternal life (*o*) through his inſtructions; who "came not to do his own will (*p*), or to act by his own authority, but his who ſent him." He had no ſhare in the deſign, but was God's agent and inſtrument in the execution of it. "He came not *of himſelf*, but *he* ſent him (*q*)." He acknowledges, too, that the character of *goodneſs*, in the moſt unlimited ſenſe, was appropriate to *God* only, in excluſion of himſelf and all other beings: "Why calleſt thou *me* good? ſays he; there is none good but *one*, that is God." He could not have expreſſed himſelf thus, had he been conſcious that it was through any *merit* of his own that the bleſſings of the goſpel had been procured, and that without ſuch exertion they could never have been obtained. The mercy of God, which is his goodneſs to ſinners, would not have been ſo commended, if, without his

(*n*) φιλανθρωπια. 2 Tit. iii. 4.

(*o*) δι' αυτȣ̃—by his miniſtry. See Acts ii. 22,—not δι' αυτον, *for his ſake, on his account.*

(*p*) John v. 30. 43.

(*q*) Ibid. viii. 42.

interference, juſtice muſt have taken its natural courſe, and mankind for ever have been the melancholy victims of it. If ſuch a doctrine as this had been true, he would never have told us, that we ſhould "love the Lord our God, with *all our heart*, with all our ſoul, and with all our ſtrength *(r)*;" becauſe, in this caſe, an equal, if not a larger portion of our affection would have been due to *himſelf*.

Theſe declarations of Chriſt and his Apoſtles inconteſtibly prove, that God is the author of all good; and that our *ſalvation* in the goſpel ought to be aſcribed to him, as the prime and original cauſe of it.

I ſhall, *ſecondly*, endeavour to ſhew, That thoſe terms in ſcripture, which ſeem to imply the contrary, were well underſtood by the Jews, to whom alone they were addreſſed; and, as ſuch, that they do not apply to us, unleſs we interpret their meaning in the ſame figurative manner they did.

The bleſſings which mankind have received through the miniſtry of Chriſt, in the goſpel, are often expreſſed in ſuch terms as *ſeem* to imply that the means which he uſed were of ſo prevailing an efficacy, that without them the favour of God could never have been obtained.

Thus he is ſaid "to give his life a *ranſom* for many *(s)*;" "to give himſelf *for* us, that he might

(r) Mark xii. 30. *(s)* Ib. x. 45.

might *redeem* us from all iniquity *(t)*." And christians are said to be "*redeemed* with the precious blood of Christ *(v)*," "to be *bought* with a price *(w)*," "to be *purchased to God* by his blood *(x)*."

A manifest reason may be assigned for the use of such expressions as these. It is language borrowed from the Jewish scriptures. The privileges, honours, and distinctions, which the Jews were favoured with under their dispensation, were all expressed by these terms. And if it be considered that the gospel was first preached to Jews, it is easy to imagine that the ministers of it would, in order to recommend it, adopt such language as was not only familiar to them, but use the very terms by which they expressed those privileges they so highly valued; that, by contrasting the advantages of christianity with the law of Moses, they might more readily embrace the offer they had to make them.

Thus, the Jews being frequently described as a people who were *ransomed (y)*, *redeemed (z)*, *bought*, *purchased*,

(t) Tit. ii. 14.
(v) 1 Pet. i. 17. 18. 19.
(w) 1 Cor. vi. 4.
(x) Rev. v. 9.

(y) Isaiah xliii. 3. I gave Egypt for thy *ransom*, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

(z) Exod. vi. 6. I will *redeem* you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments: λυτρωσομαι ὑμας, εν βραχιονι ὑψηλω, και κρισει μεγαλῃ, the word used by Luke xxiv. 21.

purchaſed, and *ſaved*, the ſame terms are uſed as equally applicable to chriſtians.

But it is not to be imagined that the Jews underſtood them in a *literal* ſenſe, viz. that any *price* was actually paid for their *ranſom*, *deliverance*, or *purchaſe*. Nor had they any idea that there was any other agent concerned in the buſineſs, beſides the Almighty himſelf.

Buying is uſed metaphorically in ſcripture, and the prophet Iſaiah explains its meaning, by applying it to that attention which ought to be paid to his inſtructions *(a)*.

In this ſenſe, we *buy*, when we ſeriouſly apply our minds to ſtudy, and receive the precepts of divine wiſdom. We are exhorted by Solomon to *buy the truth (b)*. Thus the moſt high God is alſo ſaid to *buy*, with reſpect to his creatures. He *buyeth* a people when he interpoſes in their favour, and employs all proper means to *free* them from ſufferings, or any other circumſtances of wretchedneſs, and to raiſe them to a happy and proſperous ſtate. So he *purchaſed* or *bought* the children of Iſrael, by bringing them out of the ſlavery of Egypt, to the liberty and privileges of Canaan, by his mighty power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; which may be conſidered as the *price*, improperly ſo called, for which he *bought* them *(c)*.

That

(a) Iſa. lv. i. 3. *(b)* Prov. xxiii. 23.
(c) See Taylor's Key to the Epiſtles.

That thefe terms were not meant to be taken in a *literal* fenfe, is plain from what St. Peter fays to the Jewifh converts *(d)*, "Forafmuch as ye know ye "were not *redeemed* (fet at liberty, or made free "from fin) with corruptible things, as filver or gold, "(i. e. there was a price *paid* to *purchafe* your *re-* "*demption*, or deliverance from fin,) but with the "precious blood of Chrift:" which, fimply confidered as a mere fluid, could have no more value than thofe *corruptible things* he had before mentioned, but when meant to denote the death of Chrift, it had real worth; as *that* was the higheft confirmation of the truth of the gofpel; which was the charter that freed men from fin, and enjoined them the practice of righteoufnefs; and when connected with his refurrection, was an additional motive and argument for their diligently confidering and faithfully regarding that gofpel which he preached. In this view of it, it is with great propriety they are faid to be redeemed by his blood or death. What confirms this fenfe of the word *redemption* is this: the Apoftle fays, it came from the *appointment* of *God*, and was intended to produce a belief in *him*, and dependance upon his promifes in the gofpel, of whofe defign and counfel Chrift was made the agent and minifter *(e)*; "who verily was *fore-ordained* before the foundation "of the world, but was manifeft in thefe laft times, "for

(d) 1 Pet. i. 18. 22. *(e)* Ibid. i. 20. 21.

" for you who, *by him*, do believe in God, that " raiſed him up from the dead, and gave him glory, " ſolely for this purpoſe, *that your faith and hope* " might be *in God*," and no other.

The blood of Chriſt, therefore, may be conſidered as *precious*, and chriſtians to be *redeemed* by it. But the Apoſtle, by directing their faith and hope to God, the original author of their redemption, ſets aſide every other dependance, as being only the means uſed to effect it, and not the cauſe of it: For, had there been any real *merit* in the blood of Chriſt, ſimply conſidered, the benefit of which chriſtians might have applied to themſelves, any actual *ſatisfaction* made by it to the juſtice of God for the ſins of mankind, or any *purchaſe* literally paid for their *redemption*, the Apoſtle would have drawn a very different concluſion, and would have led thoſe " *who believed in God*," not " to place their *faith* and *hope in Him*," which is the natural conſequence of ſuch a *belief*, but to have repoſed it all in Chriſt; a doctrine totally oppoſite to what he has advanced. What has been ſaid of *ranſom*, *redemption*, and *purchaſe*, is equally applicable to the terms *ſacrifice* and *atonement*.

The uſe of them was familiar to the Jews, and applied by the Apoſtles to the converts of that nation. But they were not underſtood by them in the ſtrictly literal ſenſe which is now affixed to them, viz. as expiations for any breach of the moral law.

Sacrifices

Sacrifices were effectual only in removing *legal defilements*, and in qualifying the worſhipper to appear before God in the temple. By this offering he became *purified;* he effected a temporary reconciliation with God, and was ſo far reſtored to his favour as to be admitted into his preſence to offer up his prayers there. But, as St. Paul ſays, "they could not make him that did the ſervice, perfect, as pertaining to the conſcience (*f*)." This ſort of purification is tranſlated, by *making atonement* (*g*), in a ſenſe widely different from what we uſe it, and is to be met with but once in the New Teſtament (*h*), and ſhould there have been rendered *reconciliation*, as the Greek word is in other places. If ſin and guilt could have been literally expiated for, it would not have been required of the Jews "*to make an atonement for the altar*," as well as for thoſe who were to make their oblations upon it.

As under the law there was no proper atonement for ſin, it is not likely that the Apoſtles, when ſpeaking to Jewiſh converts, ſhould uſe theſe ſacrifical terms in a ſtricter ſenſe than they had been before. But,

(*f*) Heb. ix. 9.

(*g*) Exod. xxix. 36. Και το μοσχαριον της ἁμαρτιας ποιησεις τῃ ἡμερᾳ του καθαρισμυ, και καθαριεις το θυσιαστηριον εν τῳ ἁγιαζειν σε επ' αυτῳ, και χρισεις αυτο ὡστε ἁγιασαι αυτο.

(*h*) Rom. v. 11.

But, knowing their attachment to these rites, it is highly probable that they should apply them in a better though a figurative sense to the truths of the gospel.

Thus it is said, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where there is a perpetual allusion to Jewish customs (*i*), "that almost all things are by the law "*purged* with *blood*, and without shedding of blood "there is no remission; it was therefore necessary "that the patterns of things in the heavens should "be purified with these, but the heavenly things "themselves with better sacrifices than these. For, "in the end of the dispensations, Christ hath ap-"peared to *put away sin*, by the *sacrifice of himself*."

This language would have been perfectly unintelligible to any other than Jews; but to them it denoted the superiority of the gospel above the law, which was the professed design of the whole Epistle. Not that they understood any part of it in a literal sense, as if Christ was *to put away their sins*, without their forsaking them. Very far from it; the true nature of this *sacrifice* is explained a few verses before, where (*k*) "the *blood* of Christ is said to *purge* their *conscience* from dead works, *to serve* the living God." All the efficacy of it was in promoting an entire reformation of life and manners, as a previous qualification to their becoming *the true worshippers of the living*

(*i*) Heb. ix. 22. 27. (*k*) Ibid. ix. 14.

living God. The whole life indeed of Chriſt, and every act of it, was an entire oblation to God: to ſerve the beſt intereſts of mankind in this and another world, he became a *ſacrifice*, he *devoted* himſelf wholly to the cauſe of truth and virtue; it was a life of obedience to the will of God, and to comply with that will, and not his *own* (*l*), "he became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs (*m*).

The principle which actuated him, in his regard to mankind, ought to influence *us*, if occaſion ſhould call it forth. "Hereby perceive we love, becauſe he "laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down "our lives for the brethren (*n*)." *We* may copy his bright example, be imitators of his love, and make an offering on the altar of friendſhip (*o*); but in no ſenſe can either he, or ourſelves, be ſaid to have been *real ſacrifices* to it.

What confirms the interpretation here given of the ſeveral paſſages on which the doctrine of *atonement* is built, is this: That the terms which ſeem to favour it, are all borrowed from the Jewiſh ſcriptures; are applied to remove Jewiſh prejudices, and accommodate a new doctrine to old conceptions: that, on this account, they are uſed only in epiſtles addreſſed to converts of that nation: that where the plain principles of Chriſtianity are taught, no notice is taken

(*l*) Luke xxii. 42.
(*m*) Phil. ii. 8.
(*n*) 1 Ep. John iii. 16.
(*o*) John xv. 13.

taken of them, of which there remains a ſtrong proof, that there is only one paſſage (*p*) in the hiſtory of the apoſtles preaching, where mention is made of them; and as that is to the *elders and overſeers* of the church, who were probably Jewiſh converts, it admits of the ſame general ſolution with the firſt: from which it follows, that thoſe *phraſes*, however applicable they might be to the Jews, have no relation at all to us, unleſs we underſtand them in the ſame figurative ſenſe they did.

I ſhall make a few brief remarks upon what has been ſaid, and conclude.

Firſt, Great as the benefits are which we derive through the mediation of Chriſt; highly as we may think, and we cannot think too highly, of his perfect character and complete example; yet all this muſt be ultimately referred to the glory of *God the Father*, whoſe meſſenger he was, and whoſe gracious deſigns he came to execute: on which account God, and not Chriſt, muſt ever be conſidered as the original author of our ſalvation.

Secondly, As Chriſtianity is a ſcheme to promote piety and virtue, we muſt be aware of any doctrine that would relax the principles of morality, and teach us to rely upon the merit and good actions of another for that reward which we ſhall be entitled to only for our own perſonal obedience.

Laſtly,

(*p*) Acts xx. 28.

Laſtly, In our interpretation of ſcripture, that axiom cannot be too ſtrictly adhered to, of explaining ſuch paſſages as are abſtruſe and difficult, by thoſe which are clear and cannot be miſtaken; and we ſhould remember, that whatever contradicts our firſt and genuine notions of the moral perfections of God, is a conſtruction that ought not to be admitted, and conſequently, that the puniſhing the innocent for the crimes of the guilty, or the rewarding the wicked for the righteouſneſs of the juſt, is ſuch a violation of equity as can be no part of his moral diſpenſations.

THE

PLACE, OBJECT, AND NATURE

OF

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

CONSIDERED.

Preached at the Archdeacon's Viſitation, April 23, 1790,

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ST. MARY AT TOWER, IPSWICH.

(Publiſhed at the Requeſt of ſome of the Clergy preſent.)

ST. JOHN iv. 23.

The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worſhippers ſhall worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth.

THE ſubject of converſation between our Lord and the woman of Samaria turned upon theſe points: namely, "Where the place of worſhip ought to be; who the proper object of it was; and in what manner He is to be known, and ought to be worſhipped." Upon theſe topics I propoſe to enlarge in the following diſcourſe.

I. The woman, as ſoon as ſhe found the perſon ſhe was talking with was a prophet, puts a queſtion to him relating to the place of worſhip: "Our fathers," ſays ſhe, "worſhipped in this mountain; and ye ſay, that in Jeruſalem is the place where men ought to worſhip." She does not plead the command of God to juſtify this cuſtom, but merely ancient uſage, and the right of preſcription, "Her fathers worſhipped there;" and that circumſtance was a rule to them ſufficient to ſuperſede all others.

The

The Samaritans did not want means of information in this particular. One of the priefts, who had been carried away from Samaria, was fent to dwell amongft them, purpofely to teach them "how they fhould fear the Lord." From him they muft have learned that Jerufalem was the place where men ought to worfhip. But when a people have been long attached to fuperftitious rites and ceremonies, cuftom and prejudice have more force than truth and reafon; and the circumftance of "their fathers having worfhipped in that mountain," had power to prevail even over divine authority.

The reply which our Lord makes to her, is: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye fhall neither in the mountain, nor yet at Jerufalem, worfhip the Father." She who had been ufed to think that there was fomething facred in particular places, and that prayers offered up in them had a particular efficacy, is here told, that even the Temple fervice at Jerufalem would foon ceafe, and that the worfhip of "the Father" would be confined neither to that place nor to the mountain in Samaria; but in whatever part of the world there were true worfhippers, the Father would condefcend to be adored. The earth is the Lord's, and all that dwell therein. No fpot fo folitary and concealed, but that a private worfhipper might thence acceptably pray to and praife his Creator, if his mind were in a proper frame. The difpofition of his heart would fanctify

his

his devotions, and not the place in which he offered them.

II. If the Samaritans were very zealous about the place from whence they were to prefer their prayers, they were at the ſame time equally ignorant of the Being to whom they ought to addreſs them: "Ye worſhip," ſays our Lord, "ye know not what." They were not entirely without a knowledge of God, nor did they wholly neglect his worſhip; but they aſſociated other deities with him, and ſuffered them to ſhare in their adorations. This appears in their hiſtory: "Then one of the prieſts came and dwelt "in Bethel, and taught them how they ſhould fear "the Lord. Howbeit, every nation made gods of "their own, and put them in the houſes of the high "places, which the Samaritans had made: ſo they "feared the Lord, and ſervéd their own gods, after "the manner of the nations whom they carried away "from thence (*a*). This ſpecies of idolatry is expreſsly forbidden in the ſcripture: "I am the Lord, "that is my name; and my glory I will not give to "another, neither my praiſe to graven images (*b*)." And what rendered this practice moſt culpable in them, was, that they neither followed the light of nature, nor the inſtructions of the prieſt, who had been ſent to teach them. "When they knew God, "they glorified him not as God," but divided their duty between Him and other beings, which their anceſtors

(*a*) 2 Kings xvii. 28. (*b*) Iſa. xlii. 8.

anceſtors had deified, and thus fell into the moſt ſenſeleſs idolatry.

Such muſt be ever the caſe: for when once that primary idea, of One Almighty Father of the Univerſe, is given up, there is nothing ſo abſurd and ſhocking which ignorance and folly may not adopt. How cautious then ought men to be in admitting ſentiments at all derogatory from the peerleſs majeſty of Jehovah, as they never fail to lead them into the wildeſt errors and inconceivable ſuperſtition? And what renders this ſtill more neceſſary, is, that corruptions in religion are more difficult to remove than any other. An error in worſhip, however palpable and abſurd, and by whatever means it creeps in, is often retained for no other reaſon but becauſe it is there already. So much greater veneration is always paid to antiquity, than to truth! This was exactly the caſe with the Samaritans; for we read, "that "they feared the Lord, and ſerved their graven "images, both their children, and their childrens "children; as did their fathers, ſo do they, unto "this day."

But this ignorance and uncertainty was not to be found amongſt the Jews. God had manifeſted himſelf to them by the moſt wonderful evidence of his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs. Theſe divine attributes were all exerted to give them a clear and perfect knowledge of their duty to Him. "He "ſhewed his ways unto Moſes, his works unto "the

" the childreu of Ifrael." And we repeatedly read, what was intended by this difplay of the attributes of God; that they might impref a devout and lafting idea of his unity and fupremacy; " that they might " know that the Lord he is God, and that there is " none elfe befide him."

We find our Lord alfo, during the whole of his miniftry, adhering to this fundamental principle of his national religion. His repeated and fervent acts of prayer are recorded in fcripture, and the object to whom he preferred it is moft clearly afcertained. He has left us not only his own example for our imitation, but a moft comprehenfive form of words for our ufe and direction. The Great Being, to whom He offered thefe addreffes, was One and the fame. He never varied from the object, nor taught his countrymen to adore any other than HIM, to whom they had been accuftomed. When he poured forth praifes and thankfgivings, they were uttered in this ftrain: " I thank Thee, *O Father*, Lord of " Heaven and Earth, that Thou haft hid thefe " things from the wife and the prudent, and haft " revealed them unto babes." When he meant to exprefs his fubmiffion to the divine will, and his readinefs to fulfill the purpofes of his miffion, he made ufe of thefe words: " *O my Father*, if this cup " may not pafs away from me, except I drink it, " thy will be done!" Agreeably to his own practice, He taught his difciples, " Pray to *thy Father*,

 " which

"which is in ſecret, and *thy Father*, who ſeeth in "ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly. Uſe not vain "repetitions, for *your Father* knoweth what things "ye have need of before ye aſk him." The Apoſtles followed his example, and taught the ſame doctrine. "For this," ſays St. Paul, "I bow my knees unto "*the Father* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; giving "thanks always for all things to God, even the "*Father* (*c*)." And that both our Saviour and his Apoſtles looked up for ſuccour to One and the ſame Almighty Being, the great Parent of the univerſe, the Father of mankind, appears from theſe words of our Lord: "Go to my brethren, "and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father "and your Father, and to my God and your God (*d*)." The ſame truth the apoſtle Paul aſſerts to his heathen converts: "Though there be "a multiplicity of deities, and imaginary beings, "that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in "earth; to us Chriſtians, there is but One God, "the Father, of whom are all things, and we by "him (*e*)."

The bare recital of theſe texts is ſufficient to eſtabliſh their meaning. That they ſhould ever have been miſtaken or miſapplied, is the wonder. For they are no leſs agreeable to the natural notions of

(*c*) Epheſ. iii. 14.0. (*d*) John xx. 17.

(*e*) 1 Cor. viii. 5. 6.

of the Deity, than they are to the whole tenor and design of scripture. Yet still, as was the case in St. Paul's time, "There is not in every man this "knowledge;" but there might be, if the scripture were the universal rule of faith. This is a plain and easy directory; all other guides are not only fallible, but more apt to mislead and bewilder than to give any intelligible information. The bare terms, in which some of them couch their knowledge, are often more abstruse and difficult to be comprehended than the subject of which they treat. The end too proposed, between these different ways of instruction, is very apparent. The one "is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for in-"struction in righteousness; that the man of God "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all "good works." The other is totally unprofitable; being taken up in barren speculations, which perplex the understanding, without any moral improvement, without planting one virtue in the heart. The surest way, therefore, in our religious concerns, is to adhere to the words of scripture, in every particular; by so doing, we shall become the "true worship-"pers, who know what we worship; and who wor-"ship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the "Father seeketh such to worship *Him*."

We are naturally led to consider, thirdly, the manner in which the Divine Being is to be known, and ought to be adored. Such a revelation of Him-

ſelf and his will, as the Almighty granted to the Jews, had not been vouchſafed to other nations. "He had not dealt ſo with them, neither had the "Heathen ſuch knowledge of his laws." Our Saviour might well affirm to the woman of Samaria, "we know what we worſhip, for ſalvation is of the "Jews." But we are not here to imagine, that the Jews knew more about the eſſence, or mode of God's exiſtence, than the Samaritans did. No! this was a ſecret unfathomable by them both. Their ſuperiority conſiſted in what, if rightly applied, would have terminated in a practical knowledge of their Maker; in pious affections towards Him; and in dutiful regard to his laws. And wherever, in Scripture, we meet with ſuch an expreſſion as, "knowing God," or, "the knowledge of God," it is always connected with ſome moral duty, or revelation of Himſelf, which is plain and intelligible; and never implies an abſtruſe notion, or metaphyſical idea. David ſays, "Thou, Solomon, my ſon, know thou the God of "thy father, and ſerve him with a perfect heart, and "with a willing mind; for the Lord ſearcheth all "hearts, and underſtandeth all the imaginations of "the thoughts: if thou ſeek Him, He will be found "of thee; but if thou forſake Him, He will caſt "thee off for ever (*f*)." Had there been any difficulty in the precept, the father would have explained it to his ſon; but as he could not fail of com-

(*f*) 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

comprehending it, he dwells longer upon the duty ſubjoined; for had he ſwerved from that, it would have been of fatal conſequence, a defect in practice being much more dangerous than an error in the underſtanding. But the prophet predicts *(g)*, that under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, our "knowledge," and duty to God, would need no comment to make it clear and practicable. "For this is the covenant "that I will make with the houſe of Iſrael: After "thoſe days, ſaith the Lord, I will put my *laws* into "their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I "will be to them a God, and they ſhall be to me a "people; and they ſhall not teach every man his "neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, "Know" the Lord, for all ſhall "know" me, from "the "leaſt" to the "greateſt." And the ſame prophet *(h)* tells us wherein this knowledge is to be exerciſed, and that it conſiſted in the proper diſcharge of the relative duties of life. For, ſpeaking of the good reign of Joſiah, king of Judah, he ſays, "He did *judgment* and *juſtice;* he judged the cauſe "of the poor and needy: Was not this to "know me," "ſaith the Lord?" Similar to this is the whole tenor of the goſpel: "Hereby do we know that "we know" him, if we *keep his commandments.* "Beloved, let us love one another, for *love* is of God, "and *every one that loveth* is born of God, and

 "knoweth"

(g) Jerem. xxxi. 34. *(h)* Jerem. xxii. 15. 16.

"knoweth" God *(i)*." The object of a Christian's worship, and the knowledge of God, as far as it relates to any moral and practical purpose, is so clear and plain that he may with truth affirm that "he knows" what he worships. But if the object be multiplied, or if unscriptural terms be used to express it by; if his faith be perplexed, and his reason confounded, and what ought to be known "from the "least to the greatest" be so mysterious as to be understood by neither; then it may be said of him, "that he worships he knows not what."

But ignorance and superstition were soon to give way to truth and reason; and these abuses to be rectified by a reformation, which was then to take place. "The hour cometh, and now is," says our Saviour, "when the true worshippers shall worship "the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father "seeketh such to worship Him." An end was to be put at once to the contention which had produced such heat and animosity between the Jews and Samaritans. The temple of Jerusalem, and the service in it, which God himself had instituted, was soon to cease; and all that was to be required was, that men should worship "the Father in spirit and in truth." To do this effectually, there needed neither forms nor ceremonies, no solemn temples nor costly victims, but the offering only of a clean hand and a pure heart. "Lord, who shall abide in "thy *tabernacle?* Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?

"He

(i) John ii. 3. iv. 7.

" He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righte-
" ouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the truth from his heart. He
" that hath uſed no deceit in his tongue, nor done
" evil to his neighbour, and hath not ſlandered his
" neighbour. He that ſetteth not by himſelf, but is
" lowly in his own eyes, and maketh much of them
" that fear the Lord. He that ſweareth to his neigh-
" bour, and diſappointeth him not, though it were
" to his own hindrance. He that hath not given his
" money upon uſury, nor hath taken reward againſt
" the innocent; whoſo doeth theſe things ſhall never
" fall." The worſhip of this man is acceptable, and he it is that frequents the tabernacle of the Lord in ſpirit and in truth.

Having fully conſidered the ſeveral points which were the ſubjects of our Saviour's diſcourſe with the woman of Samaria, I ſhall make a few remarks upon it, and conclude.

Firſt, it follows from what has been ſaid, That it is to no purpoſe to be zealous for the place or ceremonies of worſhip, when the doctrines of it are erroneous; much leſs to plead antiquity for the continuance of what ought never to have been admitted. For if length of time ſanctify abuſes, and age make error venerable, the church of Rome has a plea to urge, which no one that has reformed from her can diſpute: for in this caſe her precedence would be her greateſt honour. But if there be a church of ſtill greater antiquity than them all, " a glorious church

church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but holy and without blemiſh," which has truth itſelf for its author, and ſalvation for its end, it is the *chriſtian church* we ſhould be zealous for, wherever is its place, and whoever worſhips in it. Nor need its faithful members ever fear that any danger can befall it. What force or power can aſſail that fabric "which is built upon the foundation of the Apoſtles, "Jeſus Chriſt himſelf being the chief corner ſtone?" The danger is not from without, but within. "The "gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it." "But "if any man build upon this foundation, wood, hay, "or ſtubble; if any man debaſe the ſcriptures, by "adding to them abſurdities in doctrine, or ſuper-"ſtitions in practice, his work ſhall be made mani-"feſt; for the day ſhall declare it; becauſe it ſhall "be revealed by fire, and the fire ſhall try every "man's work of what ſort it is."

II. Our Saviour has predicted, a reformation would take place in the public worſhip; and a day would come, "when the true worſhippers would "worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth." That this was not done in ſuch purity as it ought, even in the Jewiſh church, which God's own right hand had planted, appears from the hypocriſy and ſuperſtition with which the Jews were ſo juſtly charged. Much leſs was it done in Samaria, "where they worſhipped "idols in company with Jehovah." The progreſs that divine truth made during the miniſtry of Chriſt

and

and his Apoſtles is aſtoniſhing. The corruptions, however, which ſoon followed, are too well known to need any remark. "The enemy ſowed tares "among the good ſeed," which grew and increaſed wonderfully. The revival of learning brings us to the æra of the Reformation, when the light of truth broke forth again, and held religion to our view; not indeed clad in her brighteſt attire, but diſgraced with too many of the tawdry ornaments with which chriſtian idolaters had diſguiſed her. Much was then done, but much ſtill remains to be done. That churches, as well as individuals, have not erred, is too much for human frailty to aſſume. We are "allowed" to ſay, "that the church of Jeruſalem, "of Antioch, of Alexandria, of Rome, have erred." And if we do not arrogate to "ourſelves" that infallibility which was the cauſe of our ſeparation from the latter, "We" may have erred likewiſe. But if candour will permit us to ſee our errors, and if we have good ſenſe to correct them, we may be able in time to avoid the fate that now awaits the See of Rome, which is tottering to its very baſis, by the weight of its own corruptions. And this we may be aſſured of, that "God will never ſuffer his *truth* to "fail." For if amidſt the general revolt of his own people, who were purpoſely ſet apart to worſhip him, "he reſerved unto himſelf ſeven thouſand "knees which had not bowed to Baal," will that prophecy remain unfulfilled, which expreſsly ſays,

"that

"that the time was coming when the true worſhip-
"pers ſhould worſhip the Father in ſpirit and in
"truth?"

Laſtly, I have only to add, that we, of this enlightened age and nation, who "make our boaſt of "God, and profeſs to know his will and approve "the things that are more excellent," that we be careful to let our practice keep pace with our knowledge; that in our belief we "hold faſt the faith once "delivered to the ſaints," which was given to them in a very ſhort ſummary: "To believe Thee, O Father, to be the only true God, and Jeſus, whom thou haſt ſent, to be the Chriſt;" and that in our worſhip we be in the number of thoſe, who in the text are ſtyled "the only true worſhippers, who wor-
"ſhip the Father in ſpirit and in truth." Thus our light will ſo ſhine before men, that they will glorify our Father which is in heaven:

To whom be aſcribed all honour, power, might, majeſty, and dominion, henceforth and for ever!

F I N I S.