

T W O
DISSERTATIONS.

I.

ON THE PREFACE TO
ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

II.

ON PRAYING TO
J E S U S C H R I S T.

By THEOPHILUS LINDSEY, A. M.

With a short POSTSCRIPT

By DR. J E B B.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard.

M DCC LXXIX.



DISSERTATION I.

On the PREFACE of

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

The Introduction.

ABOUT the latter end of the year 1773, I resigned my benefice, and withdrew myself from the communion of the church of England, because, being persuaded that there was but One God, the Father, the sole object of prayer and religious worship, I could not continue to offer up or to join in prayer to Jesus Christ, or to any other person, whom I did not look upon as God, or to be worshiped. Desirous however to stand fair in the opinion of the world, at the least of my friends and acquaintance, and not without some hope of serving the cause of truth, I made public the reasons that had compelled me to take this step for my own inward peace and quiet.

I have not been inattentive since to the opposition made to what I there delivered. It was as free to others to print their sentiments, as it had been for me to declare mine. With what temper some of them did it, was their own affair. I had no concern but with their arguments, having no aim but that of truth, and to acquit myself to my own mind. Where I had been in an error, I should have thanked the hand that had pointed it out to me.

B

Lesser

Lesser mistakes and oversights which belong to mortals I may have fallen into ; but had I knowingly falsified, or misrepresented the sentiments of the sacred writers, or of any others, I should have been unworthy the name of a man, and poor and shortlived must have been the triumph it would have afforded.

Mr. Burgh, who has written two (*a*) large books against my Apology, has been dignified with a Doctor's degree for them by the university of Oxford. How far that learned body have done themselves credit by such a public act has been discussed by Mr. Temple, (*b*) in an appendix to his letters to Dr. Randolph.

(*c*) This learned and able writer, in a former work without his name, had shewn the weakness of Dr. Burgh's arguments in favour of two other Persons, being each of them God with the Father, and exposed some of his many errors, as well as his intemperate heat against those who differed in sentiment from him. His last work is addressed to Dr. Randolph, who had undertaken to shield Mr.

(*a*) "A scriptural Confutation of Mr. Lindsey's argument against the one Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c.

"An enquiry into the Belief of the three first centuries respecting the one Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, &c." By William Burgh, Esq.

(*b*) "Letters to the Rev. T. Randolph, D. D. &c. By A. Temple, M. A. with an appendix, in which the tendency and merits of Dr. Burgh's publications are more particularly considered."

(*c*) Remarks on A Scriptural Confutation, &c. Printed for Bell, Strand, London, 1775.

Burgh

Burgh from the force of his remarks. But vain was the attempt. For if truth and argument are of any avail, Mr. Temple has now put an end to the controversy. At the conclusion of these "Letters" are some brief strictures on Mr. Burgh's second volume, which is written against a remark I had made, that the christian writers and people in general, were unitarians, before the council of Nice. And therein Mr. Temple has given solid and important evidence of fact, that "the universal church for a good part of the two first centuries was decidedly unitarian;" and farther he has not there examined. Concerning this second volume of Mr. Burgh's I would only observe, that he has exhibited a specimen at his first setting out, how far his judgment is sound and to be relied upon, by introducing quotations (a) from the acknowledged interpolated epistles of Ignatius, and making formal inferences from them, as if they had been genuine, p. 47. Thus, according to the Italian proverb, *tutto fa la galleria*.

I had therefore resolved to have left my ar-

(a) Some of these are the following. "*We have a physician the Lord our God Jesus the Christ,*" "*possessing the spirit of God, who is Jesus Christ*"—"adhere inseparably to our God Jesus Christ"—"*joy in our Lord God Jesus Christ*"—"the love of Jesus Christ our God and Saviour," which last he says is exactly similar to 2 Pet. i. 1. Another person, less under the influence of prejudice than Mr. Burgh, would wonder how Ignatius should talk of Christ being God in so very different a manner from Christ himself and his apostles; and be apt to suspect that he talked of himself, and therefore give him little credit.

guments to take their fate as I had first put them down in the *Apology and Sequel*. But the friend who had confuted Mr. Burgh and Dr. Randolph, had also with the same disinterested regards to truth, published his dissatisfaction (a) with the interpretation I had given of the prologue of St. John's gospel, the right understanding whereof seems of great importance towards settling the true character of Jesus Christ : and objections from such a pen demand respect. And a few months past, an anonymous person, in "A Letter to Dr. Jebb, " with relation to his declared sentiments " about the unlawfulness of all religious addresses to Jesus Christ," (b) has laboured much to shew that I had not sufficiently proved that point. How he came to inscribe his letter to Dr. Jebb, is not easy to divine, who has never referred his readers to any of my publications for a proof of his assertions respecting the wrongfulness of praying to Jesus Christ.

I have then judged it proper, and hope it may be of some use, to review and add farther support to what I had advanced on both these subjects, with an eye as I went along to such objections as I had met with, but without entering into a direct controversy with any one, to which I am much averse.

(a) "Objections to Mr. Lindsey's interpretation of the first fourteen verses of St. John's gospel, &c. London printed for Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard, 1776.

(b) London, printed by Galabin and Baker, No. 1. Ingram Court, Fenchurch-street, 1778.

S E C-

SECTION I.

Concerning the Preface of St. John's Gospel.

John i. 1—14. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, &c. &c.*

THIS passage in our Apostle was soon laid hold of by the learned heathens that came over to christianity, full of the notions they had been taught in their schools, of a second God, called the logos, the creator of all things under the supreme God; and by them applied to Jesus Christ. And from that time, it has principally contributed to fix the generality of christians in the belief of Jesus being God, and creator of all things. For none of the citations from the scriptures, which are commonly produced for the support of this doctrine, contain any thing that approaches to so explicit and formal an assertion of it. Nay, in reality it is doubtful, whether Christ be ever called God in any other part of the New Testament. To me it appears certain that he never is so called, which I have endeavoured to shew in another place; (a) and most assuredly it is a name which he never assumes to himself.

(a) A Sequel to the Apology on resigning the vicarage of Catterick, p. 198—207. *note.*

But here, in so conspicuous a place, in the very front of the favourite disciple's account of his divine Master, when the young and the unlearned are taught by authority they respect, that the term *logos, the Word*, stands for Jesus Christ, there is an end with them of all farther inquiry about the matter. The solemnity with which, in their apprehensions, he is pronounced to be God, so powerfully imposes on their understandings, and gains such an ascendant over them, as too often prevents their seeing that glaring evidence to the contrary, which is to be met with throughout the gospel history.

I have known some persons indeed, upon whom the plain narrative of the birth of Christ, of his helpless infancy, his growing improvements like those of other men, his being hungry, thirsty, faint, suffering, dying, continually calling himself a man, and the like; made such early strong impressions, that altho' they were instructed to consider him as God, they could never bring themselves to look upon him as any other than a human being, extraordinarily favoured of God; and have been pleased in their maturer years, to find these just and well-founded preconceptions confirmed, upon a further inquiry for themselves. But such instances of using their own judgments in the things of religion, are not very common at any age. The most part take every thing for granted and right, for or against, as the accident of their education has thrown it in their way. N. B.

N. B. It should be attended to, that this preface of St. John's gospel does not contain the words of Christ, but only the sentiments of one of his apostles, with which he judged it proper to begin his history of his great Master.

The following arguments, many of them separately taken, are of great weight, all together they seem to afford full and satisfactory evidence, that the *Word*, in the beginning of this gospel, the *logos*, as it is in the Greek, does not denote Christ or any other person, but the Word, or powerful energy of God, or his Wisdom, which by a phraseology not uncommon amongst the Hebrews, nor unusual with us, is the same as God himself.

Proofs that Jesus Christ is not the *Word*, which St. John calls *God*, by which all things were made.

1st Proof. Jesus never styles himself God, in any of his sayings and discourses that are recorded by the four historians of his life; nor does he ever drop the least intimation that he was the person by whom all things were created.

Now it is most strange, and utterly unaccountable, that he should never directly inculcate, nor at any time allude to such important points as these, had they been true. It is a strong presumption that they are not true, and that they mistake the sacred writer in this place, who apply this language to Christ.

2d Proof. The scriptures of the Old Testament throughout speak of but one person, one Jehovah, as God by himself alone, and creator of all things. It is not therefore credible that our apostle, a pious hebrew, should introduce all at once, another creator, a new God, without any notice whence he drew this strange doctrine, or by what authority he delivered it; especially when we consider, that by the law of Moses, whose divine authority he acknowledged, it was the crime of idolatry and blasphemy to have or to worship any other God but Jehovah. His lord and master Jesus made mention of no other God but Jehovah, and never took upon him (Joh. xii. 49.) *to speak any thing of himself, but as the Father*, whose messenger he was, *gave him commandment what he should say, and what he should speak*. Much less would the disciple have presumed to speak any thing of his own accord, but only what he had authority for, which most assuredly he would have produced, and ought to have produced for so singular and dangerous an innovation, and contradiction to the law of God spoken by Moses, had that been his intent in the words in question.

3d Proof. The writers of the gospel-history, and the holy Jesus, whose sayings they record, uniformly speak of but one Divine Person, *the Father*, (Joh. xvii. 3. &c. &c.) *as the only true God*; whom our Saviour

not Jesus Christ, but God himself. 9

viour also, even after his resurrection, calls *his Father* and *his God* in common with the rest of mankind. Joh. xx. 17.

St. Luke likewise, the writer of the book of the acts, which is a continuation of his history of Christ, and an account of the first planting of his religion in the world, has given us a solemn act of devotion, in which all the apostles joined; where they stile *Jesus, the child, or rather the servant, of the Lord, the God who had made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is.* Acts iv. 24, 27, 30. The apostles therefore knew no other God or Creator, but him, whose servant Jesus was.

It was after this period that St. Paul was called to be an Apostle of Christ. The same writer, St. Luke, records his famous speech in the Areopagus at Athens, wherein he tells them that *God that made the world, and all things therein—bath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the MAN whom he bath ordained; whereof he bath given assurance unto all men in that he bath raised him from the dead.*

We are persuaded that this apostle was a person of the strictest veracity, who would not disguise the truth at any time, or deceive his audience. We may conclude without all doubt, that he believed Jesus to be a man, when he so described him to the Athenians; a man who had been dead, and was raised to life again; and who had been appointed to a most important office under God,
who

who made the world and all things therein. So that St. Paul is in intire agreement with the other apostles in not holding any other God or Creator but him who raised Jesus from the dead.

N. B. Those passages in St. Paul's epistles, Eph. iii. 9. Coloss. i. 15, 19. which, speaking of Christ, say that *by him all things were created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, &c.* have been formerly examined, (*Sequel, &c.* p. 474 to the end) when it was proved, that the apostle did not therein treat of the first creation of all things, but of the new moral creation and reformation of mankind, by the preaching of Christ.

At the same time, p. 172, 173. some notice was taken of that scholastic unintelligible device of two natures in Christ; the one human, the other divine, making one person; according to which he is supposed sometimes to speak of himself as man, sometimes as God. This was a curious invention to evade the plainest declarations. For if Christ called himself a man, or his apostles at any time so called him; immediately it was replied; this was spoken of his human nature only; and so on for ever. But that holy Saviour and his apostles were utter strangers to all such equivocal language, and always spoke the thing they meant. If Jesus called himself *a man*, as he does expressly in one place, Joh. viii. 40. and intimates it directly
in

in numberless others, he would have himself to be looked upon as a man. If Paul at any time called him a man, as he does several times, it was because he was persuaded that he was a human creature.

4th Proof. It is the opinion of many learned and judicious persons, supported by very probable arguments, that Matthew, Mark and Luke, the three former historians of the life of Christ, wrote without each other's privity; and that each of them gave such an account of Jesus as he judged sufficient to supply all necessary information concerning him. But these three first evangelists never threw out the most distant hint of his being God, or the maker of the world: but, on the contrary, describe him from his birth and infancy, through the different stages of life to his death, merely as one of the human race: save only that St. Mark takes up the history at his entrance on his public ministry as the promised great prophet and Saviour of the world.

Now it is not to be believed or imagined, that these men, who were the chosen witnesses of Christ to all ages, if they had known him to be God and creator of the world, that they should never have told it in their writings, but leave such a lame imperfect account of him behind them. It may therefore be presumed, that the evangelist St. John is misunderstood in this place, when represented
and

and interpreted as differing from the other evangelists in these points.

5th Proof. It is a general allowed tradition, that St. John composed his narrative of Christ to supply the deficiencies of the three other evangelists, whose histories he had perused. And some of the early christians, who have had many followers, affirmed that his principal design in writing, was to treat of Christ's Deity, which he found omitted, or not sufficiently declared by the other evangelists.

But this is said without proof. Considering that the plan of our apostle's work led him to leave out of his narrative the pedigree, birth, infancy, growing improvements, &c. of Christ, he may be said as much as the other evangelists, to exhibit him as a dependent creature of God, truly and properly a man. Joh. i. 30. vi. 57. vii. 16, 17. viii. 40. xx. 17.

Nevertheless it must be allowed that St. John speaks in a very singular manner of Christ's divine dignity, that is, of the wisdom and mighty powers which he received from God; which he mentions more particularly and frequently than the other evangelists. However this supposition of St. John's design in writing, is expressly confuted by himself. For he declares that he wrote not to prove Jesus to be the supreme God; or an inferior God, the under creator of the world; but to shew that he was the Christ, the son of
God;

God. And the Christ, according to the scriptures of the Old Testament, and the general expectation of the jews from them, was to be a prophet, out of the midst of them, of their brethren, (Deut. xviii) like unto Moses ; that is a human creature, not God. Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name. Joh. xx. 30, 31.

6th Proof. St. John, who is here supposed to give this name or title, the *Word*, *logos*, to Jesus Christ, and thereby to teach that he was God and the Maker of all things, is never found once afterwards throughout his whole history of Christ, to ascribe this name to him, or in any shape to refer to this name and character, as belonging to him.

It is quite unaccountable, that he should think it of such importance, as to set out with it in so solemn a manner, and after so pompous a beginning to drop it intirely, and never to recur to it.

This remark and objection has been made by others. But I have never seen any attempt to answer it. Nor do I see any satisfactory solution that can be given of it, but by confessing, that our evangelist did not intend by the term *logos*, the *Word*, to denote Christ, or to assign that name to him.

7th Proof.

7th Proof. But although the apostle John, in the following parts of his history, never gives this title the *Word, logos*, to Christ, as he really did not design thereby to characterize him but Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and sole Maker of all things to whom alone it could belong : yet has he often had a retrospect to this preface of his gospel, and to the term *logos*, the *Word*, made use of by him in it, in that true sense in which we are explaining it, as signifying the Word, Wisdom or Power of God, the creator of all things, which was communicated to Jesus, and by which he was enabled to do his miraculous works, and speak with a divine wisdom, and knowledge of the hearts of men and of things to come ; so that it might be truly said, Joh. xiv. 9, 10, 11. *that he who had seen him, had seen the Father ; that he was in the Father, and the Father in him ; and that the Father that dwelled in him did the (miraculous) works.* See also Joh. i. 14. iii. 34. v. 19, 20, &c. vii. 16, 17, viii. 16, 38, 40. x. 25, 30, 37, 38. xi. 41. xii. 44, 45, 49, 50, xiii. 3, 20. xv. 1. xvii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 22, 23.

The foregoing arguments are equally opposed to all who from this preface of St. John's gospel, would prove Christ to be God, and creator of all things ; whether they be those who thereby understand the supreme Being himself, or a God inferior to him, and his under-agent in the creation of the world.

This

This latter opinion, which is entertained by those christians called Arians, is thus deduced from the first verse of this first chapter of St. John's gospel. For there, the article which is put before the word, *God*, in the second clause, *προς τον Θεον*, *with God*, being left out in the last clause before the word, *God*, *Θεος* it is thence concluded that the first is the supreme God, the article being put by way of distinction to mark it; and the other, not the supreme, but another God made and deputed by him.

The articles in our own language do not exactly correspond with those in the greek; but the english reader may thus easily comprehend what is here intended. With us, *God*, absolutely taken, without an article before it, signifies the one supreme God; and *a God*, with the article (*a*) before it, signifies one that is not properly God, but less properly, in a figurative and inferior sense. According to these persons then, if St. John had written his gospel in english, he would have thus expressed himself.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God.

In reply to this, I would observe, that without all doubt the articles in the greek are oftentimes emphatical, have not only a beauty but great significancy in them. But at the same time no one can be ignorant, that they are often used merely for ornament, *euphonia gratia*, and left out for the same reason; that they

they are also sometimes omitted, because they have been inserted before, and no particular stress laid upon them one way or the other. We shall therefore be liable to be led into great mistakes if we seek mysteries in them, and build important doctrines upon such uncertainties.

But it seems a fallacious rule, which is here sought to be established, which would require us always to understand the true God whenever the article is put before Θεός, and a false or subordinate God, when it is found without the article. For our evangelist himself, no less than four times, in this chapter, verse 6, 12, 13, 18. and thrice in this very preface to it, uses the word Θεός without the article, where evidently he intends the supreme God, but where, according to this interpretation, we shall read, *there was a man sent of a God, sons of a God, &c.*

It is not sufficient here to say, that it was customary with those heathen nations, whose vernacular language was the greek, and who held a plurality of Gods, to use the word Θεός collectively for the species, meaning by it all the several powers, which they supposed to exercise any authority or dominion over the world, and the affairs of mankind; and that the sacred writers adopted this language in general without the least danger of being misunderstood. For it is more probable that the heathens in using the word Θεός in the singular number, without the article, might refer

refer to one supreme deity presiding over the rest, which was the general persuasion in the midst of their polytheism; or it might be a language they retained from early tradition, from their first parents after the flood.

But farther, “it is so far from truth, says the learned Bishop Pearson, (a) that the scriptures observe so much the articles, as to use ο Θεος always for the true supreme God, and Θεος for the false or inferiour; that where the true is professedly opposed to the false, even there he is stiled simply, Θεος. As, Αλλα τοτε μεν εκ ειδότες Θεον, εδωλευσατε τοις μη φυσεισιν Θεοις. Νυν δε γνωντες Θεον, μαλλον δε γνωσθεντες υπο Θεου—Gal. iv. 8, 9. And where the supreme is distinguished from him whom they make the inferiour God, he is called likewise Θεος without an article; as δεσλος Ιησυχ χριστη, αφωρισμενος εις ευαγγελιον Θεου. Rom. i. 1. See 1 Cor. i. 1. 2 Cor. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Col. i. 1. And if this distinction were good, our Saviour’s argument to the Pharisees were not so: Ει δε εγω εν πνευματι Θεου εκβαλλω τα δαιμονια, αρα εφθασεν εφ’ υμας η βασιλεια του Θεου. Matt. xii. 28. For it does not follow that if by the power of an inferiour or false God he cast out devils, that therefore the kingdom of the true or supreme God is come upon them.”

The hebrews, his countrymen, for whose use, first of all, St. John composed his gospel, could not possibly understand him here, to speak of any but the one true God, Jehovah.

(a) Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Page 121.

Of any inferiour subordinate God and creator, they could never entertain the least idea, their prophets and sacred writers having been wholly silent about any such being. This was the comment and refinement of those early christian writers, Justin Martyr, and others, who marred the simplicity of the gospel, by importing into it their philosophy of a *second God and creator*, and thereby laid a foundation for that idolatry amongst christians, which soon followed; and which has continued for many ages, and still alas! continues. And those learned and excellent persons, Origen and Eusebius afterwards, unwittingly contributed to carry on the delusion, which had such an unhappy issue.

These jews who were accustomed, in their sacred writings, to hear the Word, i. e. the Power, or Wisdom of God, spoken of as God himself, would instantly see, that our evangelist by this circumlocution intended to characterise Jehovah, the only living and true God; and would understand that he himself declared it in so many words, by asserting that *the Word was God*, και Θεος ην ο λογος. This latter clause some learned men contend, ought to be rendered *God was the Word*, i. e. God was that Word or Wisdom, of which he had been speaking. So that our evangelist is most explicit and full in defining what he intended by this Word or Wisdom, of which he speaks such great things, that it was God himself.

An objection.

From the apostle's saying that the *Word* was with God, *προς τον Θεον*, as one person, we say, is with another; and immediately repeating it again—"the same was in the beginning with God;" it has been alleged, that this kind of expression can only be used of one who is companion to another, and therefore that the *Word* here stands for a Divine Person.

But this difficulty is soon removed by considering the like expressions in the scriptures, where nothing properly personal can be meant. Thus our apostle himself in the beginning of his first epistle, introduces eternal life as living with God; *we shew unto you that eternal life*, *ητις ην προς τον πατερα*, *which was with the Father*. Joh. i. 2. Yet no one will hence conclude that eternal life was a person and the companion of God.

And Prov. viii. 30. *Wisdom* says of herself, *Then was I παρ' αυτω*, by him, (i. e. the Lord, Jehovah,) *as one brought up with him: I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.*" But we do not for this maintain that Wisdom was properly a person and companion of Jehovah from the beginning. And therefore in the present instance, where the apostle describes the almighty Father in the like high figurative language, he might say, that the *Word* was ever with him; that mighty power and wisdom by which all things were contrived and produced.

A second objection considered.

A general view of this preface of St. John's gospel, will shew the insufficiency of another argument, which from Christ being spoken of as the *light* of the world, would prove that he is the *logos, the word*.

In the first five verses, our apostle declares that the Divine Word or Wisdom which first made the world, did also form the plan of men's recovery out of that sin and misery into which they had brought themselves. And this latter he expresses thus—*In him, (or it) was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.* All this is language highly figurative, and denotes that the revelation of eternal life, which the wisdom of God made to mankind by the gospel, was sufficient to have conducted them to it: but that this favour had not been received by them so well as might have been expected.

In the next four verses, 6, 7, 8, 9. the sacred writer makes a short digression to speak of the Baptist's divine mission and testimony to Christ, as John was a person particularly acceptable to his Jewish readers.

Ver. 6, 7, &c. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, i. e. John's office and province*

province was to bear testimony to Christ, that he was the Messiah and Saviour not of the jews only, but of all the world. Light was a familiar emblem by which Christ, the Messiah, was described by the prophets, and by which he was well known to the jews: so that they would readily understand him to be intended by this language of the apostle. But they would not thereby in any degree imagine that he was the *logos*, or word before-mentioned. For St. John does not say that the *Word* was the light; but that *in it was life, and the life was the light of men*: i. e. the knowledge of eternal life was imparted to mankind by the Word or Wisdom of God; of which Christ, who was foretold to be the light of the world, was the highly favoured and honoured instrument.

After this, the apostle returns to the subject with which he had set out at first, to finish what he had to say of the Word or Wisdom, which has been proved to be none other than God himself, ver. 10. *He or it was in the world, and the world was made by him, &c. &c.* For this I would beg leave to refer to a former work (a).

The *logos* then, the *Word*, in this preface of St. John's gospel, is not Christ, but the Word, Wisdom, Power of God, communi-

(a) Sequel to the Apology, &c. Page 134.

cated to him and manifested by him. This was formerly treated of more at large. But I cannot better express the general intent of this preface, than in the words of Dr. Lardner. He first proves, by a long induction of circumstances, that one main design of St. John in writing his gospel, was to shew the unreasonableness and aggravated guilt of the jews, who did not believe in Jesus, but rejected him. He then proceeds to speak to the point before us : (a) “ What “ St. John says in the introduction, appears “ to me agreeable to this main design of his “ gospel. He therein shews that Jesus came, “ and acted by the authority of God, the “ creator of the world, the God and supreme “ lawgiver of the jewish people. The eter- “ nal word, reason, wisdom, power of God, “ which is God himself, by which the world “ had been made, by which he dwelled “ among the jews in the tabernacle and the “ temple, dwelled and resided in Jesus in the “ fullest manner: so that we his disciples, “ and others who believed in him, saw and “ clearly discovered him to be the promised “ Messiah, the great prophet that should “ come into the world:” i. e. *In the be-
ginning was the Word, &c. &c. &c. And
the word was flesh, (or became man) and
dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and
we saw his glory, the glory as of the well-be-
loved of the Father.*

(a) Lardner—Supplement to Credibility. v. i. p. 437.

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This phrase, *the Word*, or (Wisdom) *was man and dwelt among us*, sounds harsh to our ears, but would not so appear to those to whom the apostles spoke, who were accustomed to the expressions of God being with, visiting, dwelling with them.—John iii. 2. xiv. 23. Luke vii. 16.

As it might have been said of Solomon, on account of his singular endowments of Wisdom from God, that in him *Wisdom was flesh* or man, i. e. an extraordinary divine Wisdom, to a certain degree, was manifested in him: so in an infinitely higher sense, on account of the vast powers which the holy Jesus received from God, was it said that in him *the Word* (or Wisdom) *was man*; i. e. the divine Word, Wisdom, Power, was manifested in him in a most extraordinary manner.

The generality of christian writers, (a) however differing in their application of this preface of St. John's gospel, have agreed in supposing him to have had in his eye that passage in Proverbs, viii. concerning Wisdom:—" *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of*

(a) *Quæris veram hujus nominis interpretationem, de qua variæ exstant eruditorum virorum sententiæ? Non vindico mihi ejus rei arbitrium; tantum, quod hic sentio, modeste, salva dissentientium existimatione et amicitia, profero. Vertendum esse hoc nomen Ratio vel Sapientia Dei—Constat cuique prologum evangelii legenti, alludere Joannem in toto illo prologo—ad caput octavum Proverbiorum Solomonis,—ut proinde talem eligere oporteat interpretationem, quæ affinis sit voci Sapientia—Vitringa—quoted by Lardner—as above.—Page 439.*

his way—I was set up from everlasting—when he prepared the heavens, I was there—when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then was I by him, as one brought up with him, &c.

As this of Solomon is a lofty and animated representation of Jehovah's creating and governing all things by his sovereign all-ruling wisdom; this introduction of our apostle's is a beautiful description of the same all-directing wisdom in the natural and moral world, employing itself for the restoration of the lost human race to virtue and to a never-ending life. And though the word σοφία, wisdom was in the lxx version ready for our author to have copied, there might be weighty reasons why he should prefer the term λογος, (a) which amounts to the same.

If any think the term *Word* should be retained in our translation of this preface of St. John's gospel, and not *Wisdom* substituted for it, as was formerly proposed, it will make no difference, if care only be taken, that thereby be not understood a person distinct from God, but an attribute of God, his almighty energy, by which, as by a word spoken, all things were at first made, and by which the blessed Jesus was divinely directed and impowered. But I am inclined to prefer its being rendered *Wisdom*, as more expressive in english of the apostle's idea, and also because with

(a) See Dr. Lardner's supplement, &c. Vol. i. Page 441—445.

us the term *Word* is so familiarised as a name of Christ, that many will go on still to connect them together, that Christ is the Word, and God; however you demonstrate to the contrary, that Christ is not intended by it. But this difficulty is at once removed by adopting Wisdom in our version.

And it was surely a very suitable introduction at a time when all the world but his countrymen were idolaters; when the most enlightened philosophers shut out the supreme being from all connection with his creatures, and gave the creation and government of all things to inferiour beings; it was a very suitable introduction of our apostle's work for him to assert, that there was a superintending wisdom and intelligence, one eternal, almighty, sovereign mind, by which all things were made and governed, who took care of his children of mankind, and had plan'd a benevolent scheme of things to bring them to himself and their true happiness.

SECTION II (a).

Jesus Christ had no existence before he was born of his mother Mary.

IT belongs to our subject to take some notice of those parts of St. John's gospel, which have been supposed to intimate that Jesus had a being before he was born of his mother Mary, as they have been held to fall in with the common notion of his being the

(a) In this section are considered the passages in our evangelist, which are held to be most conclusive in favour of Christ's preexistence, which is the reason of the title prefixed to it. But the full proof of this point, *that our Saviour had no being before he was born of his mother Mary*, is given, if I may be permitted so to speak, in a former * work, under the following heads, shewing that Jesus was truly and properly a man, and nothing more :

1. From the prophecies that went before concerning him, which uniformly speak of him as a man.

2. From the universal expectation of his countrymen at the time of his appearance, grounded on their ancient prophecies, that he was to be a great prophet, one of their own kindred, like themselves.

3. From the narrative of his birth, childhood, and progressive improvements, resembling those of other men.

4. From his continually speaking of himself as a man.

5. From John the Baptist's testimony and direct declaration concerning him, that he was a man.

6. From the report and testimony of his apostles, and particularly of the four historians of his life and of the first preaching of his religion in the world ; who never appear to have taken him for any other, nor ever taught jews or heathens to look upon him as any other, than a human creature, highly favoured of God, and endowed with divine powers from him.

* A Sequel to the apology on resigning the vicarage of Catterick, chap. viii. p. 385, &c.

word,

before he was born of his mother Mary. 27

word, logos, God and creator of all things, spoken of in this his preface, and that they support and confirm it. And although all those passages of our evangelist which are alleged for the preexistence of Christ, have been formerly examined at full length, and been shewn not to signify any thing of the kind, but only to be expressive in the well known hebrew idiom of his divine Messiah-character ; it may nevertheless be expedient, as briefly as may be, to give the reader an idea of that method of interpretation, referring him however always for fuller satisfaction to that larger work.

But I would previously beg leave to observe, that one of those proofs which have been above brought to shew that our evangelist could not intend in the preface of his gospel to stile Christ, God and creator of all things, is also applicable here. For the three former evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, being generally allowed to have written their histories of Christ with a view to acquaint their christian brethren with every thing they thought of consequence to be known concerning their divine Master ; can any one imagine that they would have made no mention of his having lived before he was born of Mary in the highest dignity with God for indefinite ages, if they had believed it ? To have been silent upon a circumstance of such singular import, would have argued either blameable ignorance or unfaithfulness and negligence, of any of which their apparent moral characters forbid us to accuse them.

But

But on perusing the histories of these three former evangelists, no one would conclude that Jesus was any other than a man, in this respect only differing from the rest of mankind, in being a prophet of God of the highest order, and invested by him with most extraordinary divine powers. St. Luke's history in this view demands a particular attention.

Luke iii. 23—38. The Evangelist proves Jesus to be *the son of God* by deducing his pedigree from Adam.

— i. 26—56. ii. He gives a particular account of the place and manner of Christ's birth, his infancy, his most promising early parts in respect of piety and virtue—his gradual improvements in both, and in all other things, similar to the rest of mankind.

— iv. 24. xiii. 33. Jesus acknowledges himself to be *a prophet* of God.

— vii. 16. xxiv. 19. Jesus is called *a prophet*.

— *Son of man*, Jesus's ordinary stile in speaking of himself.

— vii. 36. xi. 37. xxii. 39—46. xxiii. 46. Jesus lives and converses, suffers pain and dies, like other men.

The same evangelist, St. Luke, in another work, treating of the things that happened after Christ's resurrection;—

Acts

before he was born of his mother Mary. 29

Acts i. 14. speaks of certain persons as still related to Jesus, stiling them *his mother and brethren*, after he was taken up to heaven.

— iii. 13, 26. iv. 27. 30. Peter and the other apostles call Jesus *the servant* of God.

— x. 38. Peter instructing Cornelius in the christian faith, describes Jesus as the man of Nazareth, who had extraordinary powers and a divine commission from God.

— xiii. 23. Paul represents Jesus as a man of David's family.

— xvii. 24, 30. — calls him expressly *a man*, appointed to an important office under God that made the world.

— xxii. 8. Christ in his highest exaltation calls himself *Jesus of Nazareth*, i. e. the man of Nazareth :

From all these particulars, which are uncontradicted by any thing else said by him, it is demonstrable, that St. Luke looked upon Jesus to be one of the human race, the great prophet of God, and nothing more, both in his lifetime on earth, and after his restoration to life and ascension into the nearer presence of God :

As therefore we cannot suppose these three former evangelists ignorant of, or careless in not mentioning Christ's preexistence, if it had been true ; we have reason to infer from their intire silence that we mistake the words of St. John where we think *he* differs from them, and asserts that he had a being before his birth from his mother Mary.

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SECTION III.

A brief account of certain forms of expression in St. John's gospel, which have been thought to favour the supposition of Christ being the Word, logos, mentioned John i. 1.

THE blessed Jesus seldom in direct words declared himself to be the Messiah. This he purposely avoided ; often out of modesty, at other times out of prudence ; that he might not irritate his enemies, or invite any of his indiscreet followers to raise a tumult about him. He therefore used certain phrases and circumlocutions, which sufficiently expressed the same thing, without hazarding any of the consequences which might have ensued, if he had spoken more directly : Such, as for instance—*his coming down from heaven, coming forth from the Father, coming into the world, coming out from God, proceeding forth from God, coming forth from God.*

To an hasty inattentive reader, this language will seem quite conclusive that he must have lived in a prior state with God before his birth here below. But a little examination will shew that it means no such thing ; that it only relates to his power and authority which he had received from God as the Messiah ; and that, though in an inferiour degree, it is nothing more than might be used concerning John the Baptist, or any of the ancient prophets, or his faithful apostles.

But

before he was born of his mother Mary. 31

But let us listen to the holy Jesus, teaching us how to understand this language, which he uses concerning himself.

In one of those answers to his insidious adversaries, which we may presume made the late ingenious and worthy Rousseau cry out, "what presence of mind, what acuteness, what truth in his replies!" we are told Matt. *xxi. 23. &c.* that *When the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching in the temple, and said; by what authority dost thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? Jesus answered and said unto them; I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, if we still say, from heaven; he will say unto us, why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, of men; we fear the people: for all hold John to be a prophet.*

It was indifferent whether he had asked, did John come down from heaven? or, was his baptism from heaven? And it is plain by their answer, that all that the chief priests understood him to intend by it, was, to ask whether John was a prophet, i. e. whether he had authority from God to baptise and to make disciples.

Be it noted then, that in Jesus's account, a man *comes from heaven*, when he acts by a commission from God, as John did. And a doctrine *is from heaven*, when preached by a prophet,

prophet, by one divinely authorised, as the Baptist was.

At another time, in his dialogue with a different set of cavillers, suiting his discourse, as his discourses were always suited, to the men and the occasion, by one of his wonted beautiful allusions, Jesus calls his doctrine *meat* that was to nourish those that received it, *bread from heaven*, and also speaks of himself as *coming down from heaven*. Joh. vi. 32, 33, 38. *Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that (not he) which cometh down from heaven, and giveth light unto the world.—I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

Here he calls his doctrine *bread from heaven*, *bread that cometh down from heaven*, because delivered by him who had a commission from God to teach it. And he says that he himself *came down from heaven*, because he had authority from God, was a prophet as John was, though vastly superiour to him in dignity and excellence of character and extent of commission. To take away every shadow of doubt, if any can remain, that this *coming down from heaven* is not literally to be understood, but merely expressive of our Saviour's prophetic character, he himself confirms it in the very place before us, when he says, *I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me; for*
he

before he was born of his mother Mary. 33

he obviously makes use of the phrase his *being sent from God* as synonymous with and explanatory of his *coming down from heaven*. But all will allow that our Saviour's *being sent from God*, does not imply that he had existed before he came into this world. For if so, they must admit the same to be true of John the Baptist, that he also had a being before he was born of Zachariah and Elizabeth. For he is expressly declared by our evangelist to have been *a man sent from God*. Joh. i. 6.

John the Baptist therefore might have said of himself; *I came down from heaven*; as he was a prophet, sent from God. He might also have said, *I am the bread that cometh down from heaven*; as his doctrine and authority were from God. But he could not have added—*I am the bread, &c. that giveth life unto the world*. Because John did not teach the doctrine of eternal life. That was reserved for his great Master and Principal, our Saviour Jesus Christ, (2 Tim. i. 10.) *who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*.

In like manner, in another place, Jesus says of himself, Joh. viii. 42. *I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me*. And in his last prayer for the progress and success of the truth he had taught, made in the hearing of his disciples; he says, Joh. xvii. 8. *they have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me*. In these several

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ral instances, *the proceeding forth and coming from God, and coming out from him*, are, as just now observed, equivalent to the being *sent by him*. But John the Baptist was, as before noted, a *man* (Joh. i. 6.) *sent from God*. Therefore it might have been said, though in a very inferior sense, concerning John, that *he proceeded forth and came from God, and came out from him*.

In the same divine prayer, our Saviour, with humble confidence, recounting before his heavenly Father, that he had faithfully discharged the trust reposed in him; says concerning his disciples; (Joh. xvii. 18.) *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world*. Here it evidently appears, that Christ's being sent from the Father into the world, does not import that he had lived with God in a former state, or that he had a being before he was born of his mother Mary. For then it might, from the similar language used concerning his apostles, be equally asserted, that they his apostles had preexisted in another state, before they were born of their respective parents. But he speaks only of his divine commission and appointment to preach the gospel, which he calls being *sent from the Father into the world*; which commission his disciples shared in common with him; with this difference only, that he had his appointment immediately from God, they from him, but all under

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der the sovereign controul and direction of the heavenly Father of all.

John xvi. 28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

These very solemn words fell from our Saviour the very evening before he was put to death. From having always attached to them the sublime idea of his having lived from all eternity with the Father, it will seem to some well nigh impious to give them another turn. But we are to regard what the blessed Jesus himself thought and intended, and not what we or others through inconsiderate prejudice have affixed to his words. The former clause of this sentence, *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world*, might, as we have shewn, in an equally proper but inferior sense, have been applied to John the Baptist and Christ's apostles. But the expressions in the latter clause, *again, I leave the world, and go to the Father*, having a reference to Christ's speedy restoration to life, would not suit his apostles, who, with the rest of the human race, were to remain under the power of death, till the general resurrection of all the faithful servants of God. Such language however might have been properly and justly adopted by the prophet Elijah, who was translated (2 Kings ii. 11.) into heaven without seeing death, as Christ was translated, without remaining under the power of it; and Elijah might have said to his disciple Elisha, at parting from
him,

him, as our Lord to his disciples; *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.* Not that the great prophet of the law is to be compared to the blessed Jesus, who in moral worth, and dignity of office far surpassed all others; and in the degree of the divine communications made to him, was favoured above all that ever appeared in this world of our's.

John iii. 13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven.*

This is certainly not true, if taken in the literal sense of the words. For Enoch and Elijah had both been taken up into heaven long before. In the beginning of this dialogue, the learned jewish ruler had told Jesus, that he was persuaded that he was *a teacher come from God*, i. e. a divine prophet; by his miraculous works. Our Saviour would prove himself from here, not only to be a prophet, but the great prophet that was to come into the world, the Messiah; by alleging that he was favoured with the knowledge of the divine will and councils above all other prophets that had gone before him; which he signifies in high figurative language, the meaning of which was well understood by Nicodemus, and had been long in use with their holy men and prophets. It would never enter into his thoughts

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thoughts that it was to be understood in any other way. For Jesus to have said, that *he had ascended into heaven, had come down from heaven, and was then whilst he was present and speaking to him, actually in heaven*, in the literal meaning of the words, would have seemed only to perplex and confound him. But to assert that he was favoured and entrusted with the final revelation of the word and will of God to his creatures of mankind was an intelligible doctrine, and much to his purpose.

There is a similar passage, Joh. i. 18. where the evangelist expresses the very same thing, but by different figurative language: *No man hath seen God at any time. The beloved son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. — Which is in the bosom of the Father,* ο ων εις τον κολπον τῃ πατρος, exactly answers to *which is in heaven*, ο ων εν τω ορανω, and corroborates the interpretation here given.

John vi. 62. *What and if ye shall see the son of man ascend up where he was before?*

A little attention will convince us, however it may strike us at first to the contrary, that our Saviour did not intend here to teach that he had been in heaven, properly speaking, and had lived there before he was born of his mother Mary. Through the whole of his foregoing discourse, to which this passage be-

longs, he is speaking designedly in a highly figurative obscure stile, to get rid of some worthless men, who followed him out of mean worldly views. And though he perceived their murmuring at his harsh and dark way of speech, he did not judge it fitting to explain himself any farther than by telling them, that his words were not to be taken in the gross literal sense. It is moreover apparent, that this that he here speaks of himself, cannot be understood literally. For the *son of man*, Jesus, the son of Mary, had never been in heaven, at the time that he thus speaks of himself; nor did he go thither till he was taken up after his death. We are therefore to search for some other probable meaning of his words. And, in a former work, (*Sequel* p. 221.) this that follows was pointed out. "When you shall see me *go up to heaven*, to God (alluding to his future ascension) *where I was before*, i. e. from whom I have received my instructions and authority; you will then understand this language that I now hold to you, and believe me to be the Messiah.

Some perhaps may be more pleased with the following illustration. Jesus does not here refer his disciples to his ascension, strictly so called, which was in itself a point of small consequence; but to his exaltation with God afterwards, what he himself calls, *sitting at the right hand of power*. Matth. xxvi. 64. *hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven;*

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heaven; where this lofty language denotes the punishment of the jews for their cruel unrelenting opposition to the gospel. And, in general, it means the evidences of his mission displayed after his death, by the gift of the spirit, the conversion of the gentiles, &c. So that thus both parts of the sentence, his *ascending up*, and being *where he was before*, will be understood like the rest of his discourse, in the figurative sense. As if he had said; “ You
 “ will not now believe my mission from God.
 “ What will you say when you behold the
 “ future display of God’s power in favour of
 “ my gospel. This will not fail to convince
 “ you of my being highly favoured of God,
 “ i. e. of my *having ascended into heaven*; and
 “ that I am now sent from God, i. e. *was*
 “ *formerly with him.*”

This interpretation receives light from Joh. iii. 13. above explained. To the same sense also St. Paul says of Christ, Eph. iv. 10. *that he ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things*; i. e. he received power and gifts from God to be bestowed upon his followers, in attestation of the divine truth of the gospel,

John viii. 48.

Verily, verily, I say unto you; before Abraham was, I am.

It was made to appear in another place, that all that our Saviour did assert, or meant

to assert, in these words, to his countrymen, was, that he was, what they denied him to be, the Messiah; the great personage, whose day Abraham *saw and rejoiced*; i. e. was made happy in the prediction of so great a blessing, that at some future time was to be bestowed upon his posterity.

And it was proved also, that our english translators, to have been consistent with themselves, should have translated here; *Before Abraham was, I am* he, or *I am* the Christ. For so they have rendered the phrase, *εγω ειμι*, *I am* he, ver. 24, 28. of this very chapter, and also Joh. xiii. 19. See and compare Mark xiii. 6. Luke xxi. 8. Matth. xxiv. 5. And at the same time was pointed out what led our translators into this error.

Jesus therefore affirms nothing of himself having had a being before Abraham; but that God's design, that he should in some future time descend from one of Abraham's family, was formed before Abraham had a being. Christ, though he had no actual existence, might yet be said to have preexisted in the divine mind; because, as one of his apostles speaks, (1 Pet. i. 20.) *he verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times.* And christians, his followers, in the same phrase of scripture, may be said to have been before Abraham, as God is said (2 Tim. i. 9.) *to have given us his grace in Christ Jesus before the World began.*

John

before he was born of his mother Mary. 41

John xvii. 6.

And now, o Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was!

To the reader, who judges of the sense of the scriptures from detached scraps and sentences, without attending to the drift of the writer or speaker, and the connexion of his discourse, this petition of Christ's to the Father will appear a direct assertion, that he had a being with him before the world was.

But the full proof that we have to the contrary from what **he himself** says in this very prayer, that he does not here ask God for any thing that he had possessed in a former state, should teach us the necessity of studying the peculiar phraseology of the scriptures; a study not so needful then for our Lord's immediate hearers to whom it was familiar; yet not difficult for the most ordinary capacity to succeed in now, with a little attention.

For Jesus himself acquaints us, that this **glory** which he prayed for, was to be consequent upon his finishing the work, which God had given him to do; i. e. the reward of his labours and obedience unto death in the cause of the gospel: and therefore it could not have been any thing he had ever enjoyed before, ver. 4, 5. *I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, o Father, glorify thou me, &c.*

It was an honour and felicity also, whatever it was, in which his first disciples, nay
all

all his faithful followers to the end of time, were to share with him. ver. 22. *And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one.* Therefore it could not have been any thing peculiar to himself, or any dignity that he had possessed with God before the world was.

Moreover it was what he most ardently desired and made the subject of his request to the heavenly Father, the evening before he was to suffer death, of which he had an exact foreknowledge; in a solemn prayer, uttered in the hearing of his disciples, for himself, for them, and for all his disciples every where, in all time to come. And what could there be at such a juncture, that this holy and benevolent Saviour may be supposed to have had most at heart? It could not be any dignity or honour merely regarding himself, that he was so deeply concerned for, at such a season, and in so earnest a manner. It surely could be nothing (as was shewn at large in another place) (a) but the success of that divine truth which he had preached, and which was calculated to promote the virtue and everlasting happiness of mankind.

Of this he was the first great Teacher; and his apostles and others were destined to carry on the work after him. In this he was so much interested (which shewed the godlike excellent mind that was in him) as

(a) Sequel to the Ap-logy, p. 243—246.

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to esteem it his highest honour and reward from God, *his glory*, to be made the prime instrument in so glorious a work.

And his saying, that he *had had this glory with the Father before the world was*; was only a hebrew way of speaking, that God in his allwise eternal councils had designed it for him: as in one place, (Rev. xiii. 8.) he is stiled *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; because it was fore-ordained, that he should be the righteous innocent sufferer, for the truth of the gospel, and for the good of mankind.

It therefore might truly be said, that *his apostles also had glory with the Father before the world was*, though an inferior glory; as they were designed of God, to share in the honour and felicity of contributing to the success of the gospel, in which their divine Master had first laboured, and for which he had voluntarily sacrificed his life.

but not having the will in word *And he was of such a nature that he was a divine person* *most perfectly*

Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

—*Who being in the form of God, i. e. (endowed with divine powers.) was not eagerly desirous to be like unto God, (i. e. to display those divine powers;) but demeaned himself, taking upon him the form of a servant, being in the likeness of common men. And being in the condition of a common man, he humbled himself (i. e. still lower,) and became obedient un-*

to death, even the (infamous, slavish) death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and graciously bestowed upon him a name which is above every name——.

Such was the version and interpretation of this famous passage, formerly given, and confirmed by sundry arguments, against which nothing solid hath been produced; and it was made to appear that the apostle did not in the least allude to any being which our Saviour had, before his birth from his mother Mary. The chief difficulty lies in the expression, *his being in the form of God*. About which there would not have been so many disputes, if it had been duly considered, that the apostles of Christ never speak of his nature; (it being all along taken for granted by them that he was a man;) but of his office and powers from God, and conduct and demeanour under them. *The form of God* therefore was something that he appeared with in his life-time upon earth. Now in his outward form and person he was a plain common man, having therein nothing peculiar, or different from others. But under this humble outside garb, he possessed a divine power of doing good, of healing the sick by a word's speaking, raising the dead, foretelling things to come. This was that *form of God*, with which the holy Jesus was invested. And what could more truly deserve the name? For therein he appeared as a god unto men. But these divine gifts and powers, this *form of God* with which he was

was decked, he often laid aside, he was never vain of shewing, he never used it for his own ease or benefit, but devoted himself therewith as a slave, to serve mankind in their most important interests, in a future world; and in the mean while, and for the same great end, submitted to the want of many things, to the insults of men, and the most cruel unjust sufferings and to death, because such was the will of God; as if he had been a real criminal, and unpossessed of these divine powers. *Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, &c.*

To confirm this method of interpretation, and still farther to evince, that St. Paul does not here refer to any being or powers, which Christ had in a prior state, I shall present the reader with the curious remark of a learned friend, who, I hope, will one day have leisure to enrich the christian world with those many important illustrations of the sacred writings of the New Testament, of which he is possessed, and whereof this may well serve for a sample.

From the many directions given by St. Paul (1 Cor. xii.) to the christians at Corinth, concerning the use and intent of the different miraculous gifts, with which in the infancy of the church they were indulged by divine providence, we find that they were as liable to fall into great disorder in the management of them, as in the use of their different natural abilities from God, and were sometimes tempted to convert them into instruments of vain-glory,

glory, instead of employing them for the edification and benefit of others, for which alone they were bestowed.

Now in the four first verses of the second chapter, our apostle, with uncommon earnestness, exhorts his much loved Philippian converts, to humility, kind condescension and unity with one another. He does not indeed directly mention, from what quarter it was, that he apprehended the danger of divisions and disunion amongst them; but we may reasonably presume it to have been, from the mismanagement of their different spiritual gifts, because of his conjuring them by the *fellowship or communion of the spirit*, to listen to him, and from his specifying so particularly v. 3, 4. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem another better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.* Immediately upon which he subjoins the example of Christ, v. 5, 6, &c. *Let the same mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Who being in the form of God, was not eagerly desirous to be like to God, &c. &c.*

“It hence appears to be the apostle’s design, to describe the humble demeanour of Jesus, in the full possession of those spiritual gifts, the partial donation of which to others, was so frequently wont to elate his followers with pride: and to recommend a similar deportment

ment to the members of the christian church. As if he had said;

Be you of the same mind with the author of your salvation: who betrayed not any selfish complacency in the divine powers which he enjoyed, but acted as one destitute of them, and condescended with the utmost self-abasement, as a servant attending on his Lord, to the spiritual necessities of others. (See John xiii. 13, 14, 15, which is a symbolical representation of his practice.)

So likewise, ye Philippians, notwithstanding your high advantages, and dignity from your spiritual gifts, &c. &c."

SECTION IV.

Of Socinianism, and Socinus.

IN the year 1750, Dr. Lardner published his famous treatise on the Logos. The chief design of it is to prove that Jesus Christ was a man, endowed with extraordinary divine powers, but who had no existence before he was born in Judea. But in a large Postscript to it, he has demonstrated also from the scriptures, that the Spirit or Holy Spirit, spoken of in the New Testament, does not signify any Divine Person called by that name, but the Divine Power, the miraculous gifts, imparted
first

D I S S E R T A T I O N II.

ON PRAYING TO

J E S U S C H R I S T.

S E C T I O N I.

God, Jehovah, one single Person, and the sole object of religious worship and prayer.

IT is a consideration which has afforded peculiar satisfaction, in being called upon to illustrate the subjects of these Dissertations; that they have a strict and immediate connexion with our true happiness, and the duty we owe to the gracious Power that made us, and gives us all things liberally to enjoy. For it is surely of great importance to the quiet and repose of our minds, to know, whether there be any *first* author of all things, any God or creator, but one; and also whether we are to worship or pray to more Persons than one. Because if there be more Persons than one, who are Gods, equal to each other, and who have equal claims upon us; we might be at a loss how to distribute our affection to each of them, especially when commanded to love one (Deut. vi. 4, 5. Mark xii. 29, 30.) *with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength*; which would necessarily exclude all equal regards to any other but that one. Uneasy fears also might often arise, lest we should not pay the due proportion of respect to each of these supposed Divine Persons. And if religious addresses are to be

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made to two or three Divine Persons, the thoughtful, serious mind, would oftentimes be involved in inextricable darkness and perplexity, when to pray to the one, and when to the other; whether the different objects of worship were represented of equal or unequal dignity :

“and find no end, in wand’ring mazes lost.”

The doctrine of the Divine Unity is manifestly the doctrine of the Old and New Testament. And in these enlightened times, to the serious inquirer into the visible frame of nature, every thing appears clearly to be the workmanship of one supreme, intelligent, benevolent cause. It is therefore to be hoped, that the christian nations will e’er long awake out of the polytheism, into which their idolatrous prejudices, and false philosophy, led them at their first embracing of the gospel of Jesus; which has cleaved to them, from that time to the present hour, with exception of some few lesser societies of christians, or private individuals, that sprung up from time to time, and bore their testimony against the reigning defection from this first doctrine of all true religion.

But whilst we endeavour, as is our duty, to impart the light of divine truth, which is given us, to others, that they may be benefited by it, we should be careful not to censure or condemn any for their different apprehensions and judgments of things, however important they may seem in our own eyes.

And

And on the other hand, whoever worships the one supreme cause and Father of all, and believes in the divine mission of Jesus, as he would have been owned (a) by him, our great Master, when on earth, as his disciple ; so should he be received by all, as a fellow-disciple and brother.

Among the Israelites, who had the benefit of a divine revelation, there was no difference or dispute concerning the object of religious worship, except when at any time they fell into the idolatry of the nations around them. All agreed, that they were to worship the one God, and that it was HE, whose name was Jehovah, who was God alone, and no other besides him.

And that this Jehovah, whom they adored, was one single Person, and not more than one, is demonstrated beyond the possibility of a confutation, by the manner in which he is introduced speaking of himself, and in which others are found to speak of and to address him.

Thus, Isaiah xlv. 5. *I am the LORD (Jehovah), and there is none else, there is no God besides ME.* Psalm c. 3, 4. *Know ye that the LORD (Jehovah) HE is God ; it is HE that hath made us, and not we ourselves : we are HIS people, and the sheep of HIS pasture. Enter into HIS gates with thanksgiving, and into HIS courts with praise, be thankful unto HIM, and speak good of HIS name.* 1 Kings

(a) See pag. 49, 50, &c. of the foregoing Dissertation.

63 *Jesus Christ was a man, not God.*

viii. 28. *Yet have THOU respect unto the prayer of THY servant, and to HIS supplication, O LORD (Jehovah) my God, to hearken unto the prayer which THY servant prayeth before THEE this day.*

These pronouns, *I, thou, thy; me, thee; he, him, his;* can no way be tortured to signify more persons than ONE. If this be not certain, we can be certain of nothing.

SECTION II.

Jesus Christ was a man, not God.

IT is matter of melancholy reflection, that the religious worship of more persons than one, the worship of any other but Jehovah alone, so severely condemned by the divine law given to Moses, should have taken root so soon, and spread to that prodigious extent which it has done, among the followers of Christ; who was himself one of the hebrew people, a pious worshiper of Jehovah, a prophet like unto Moses; and who taught the same doctrine in this behalf that Moses taught.

It will appear the more extraordinary, that the meek and humble Jesus, whose greatest glory and felicity was to be the faithful servant of God, should have been set up as the supreme God over all, and worshiped equally with

with him, the Father of himself and of all ; if we consider the representations which the sacred writings make of him, and the account which he uniformly gave of himself.

As he was designed to fill a most important station in the moral creation of God, it was held fitting in the councils of the divine providence, to give notice of him, and of the great part which he was to act, long before he was born. But in all the prophecies that went before concerning him, he is constantly described as one of the human race.

Thus Gen. iii. 15. It was intimated to our first progenitors, soon after their transgression, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*. In which words, highly figurative, suited to the ignorance and prejudices of those times in which the sacred historian wrote, he teaches, that the Almighty creator gave hope from the first, that one born of woman, should be instrumental in removing the fatal ruin brought on his creatures of mankind by sin, and in restoring them to innocence and the divine favour. To this passage concerning the fall, St. Paul refers, where he observes, 1. Cor. xv. 21, 22. *For since by MAN came death, by MAN came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. Note here, reader ! that in St. Paul's account, as surely as Adam was a man, Christ was a man also.

70 *Jesus Christ was a man, not God.*

In process of time, this future restorer of the human race, was more particularly defined and distinguished ; that he was to be of the family of Abraham ; of the tribe of Judah. Gen. xxii. 18. xlix. 10.

But much to be remarked is the language, in which God himself speaks of Christ beforehand, and in which Moses the servant of God, is at the same time found to speak of him ; such language as could belong only to a human creature, and to no other. Deut. xviii. 15, 18. *I (the Lord Jehovah) will raise them up a prophet, from among their brethren, like unto thee. And—The LORD thy God will raise up to thee a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me.* And what must strike every one that has any attention in him, the very words of this prophecy are quoted and applied to Christ after his resurrection, by the apostle Peter, Acts iii. 22. *For Moses truly said unto the fathers ; A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me ;* and by St. Stephen, vii. 37. *This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel ; A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren :* and most probably alluded to by our Saviour himself, John v. 4. *For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me : for he wrote of me.*

The promised blessing was again confined to David's family, 2 Sam. vii. 16. Isaiah xi. 1, 2. comp. Acts xiii. 23.

Says

Says Isaiah, predicting the birth and kingdom of Christ; ix. 5. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called, wonderful, counsellor, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER.*—

It is obvious that it is one born of woman, a human creature, that is here characterized by these magnificent titles. Bp. Lowth, in his *ISAIAH*, a late very valuable work, has removed out of his new translation, the glaring contradiction of our old one, which had been often noted by others, in calling *a child born the everlasting Father*, by rendering it *the Father of the everlasting age*. I find that Luther, so long ago, in his german version, instead of *the mighty God*, put *the mighty Hero*. And certainly it ought to be translated differently than it is in our bible; either *the mighty potentate, prince*, or something to that sense; to convey the true intent and meaning of the prophet to the english reader. Otherwise, language so ambiguous, or rather so clearly appropriated to the almighty eternal being, as the phrase *the Great God* is with us, will unavoidably confound, perplex and mislead.

Isaiah liii. In this chapter Christ is delineated as a human creature, of high moral excellence; destined to sufferings, which would be brought upon him, not by any demerits of his own, but to which he should voluntarily expose himself, in the cause of righteousness and for the good of others.

There is a part of this description, which, without any just grounds, has been wont to be brought to prove what is termed, *the eternal generation* of Christ; viz. ver. 8. *Who shall declare his generation?* But it has been shewn by many, that the word, in the original, which we translate *generation*, cannot relate to any thing of the kind. The abovenamed learned writer has most probably given us the right version, viz; *For, his manner of life who would declare?* See Bp. Lowth's *Isaiah*, liii. 8. in the notes.

At the time appointed of God, this great prophet, saviour, and deliverer came; raised up by the extraordinary power of God, of the seed of Abraham, the tribe of Judah, and family of David, as was foretold of him; Jesus, the son of Mary the wife of Joseph; born in the feeble state of all other human beings; and, like them, acquiring knowledge, and making improvements, by degrees. His countrymen looked for their Messiah, from their ancient prophecies, to be a man; and found Jesus, who took upon him that character, to be one, like themselves. He perpetually spoke of himself as a man. His apostles uniformly and invariably so speak of him; and neither in his lifetime, nor after his death, and resurrection to an immortal life by the power of God, do they consider him as any other; yet a man, foreordained, chosen of God, born to act the noblest and most godlike part, to bring the rational creatures of God
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Jesus never taught men to pray to himself. 73
to virtue and true happiness, and devoting himself without any self-regards wholly to this service; welcoming disgrace, poverty, sufferings, and death, that lay in his way to it.

Gratitude, reverence, esteem, admiration as of superiour excellence, that WORSHIP, which consists in these and the like regards, will ever be due to this holy and benevolent Saviour. But prayer, religious worship, belonged, before he was born, to the one supreme God, to Jehovah alone, according to his own most express appointment; nor may it, without the like express appointment, from him, be transferred to another.

SECTION III.

Jesus never taught men to worship or pray to himself.

WE are therefore to inquire, whether the holy Jesus made any change, by authority from God, in this respect; whether he proposed any other object of worship to his followers; whether he in any shape, directly or indirectly, by himself or his apostles, gave intimation, that religious worship and prayer were to be offered to himself.

As believers in the one only true God, the creator of all things, we seem not justifiable in
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74 *Jesus never taught men to pray to himself.*

introducing a different object of worship, a new Divine Person, a new God, to whom our prayers and praises are to be addressed, without an express command for it, from the Being that made us, or one authorised by him. It is not a slight matter; to be left to be gathered from doubtful ambiguous expressions, or by way of inference only: but should be explicitly and directly laid down, so that none can misapprehend or mistake it.

But never upon any occasion, or in any one instance, did the blessed Jesus direct or command men, to pray to him.

If such worship had been due to him, if it had been fitting to pay it to him, if he had had any claim to it, he surely would have told his disciples plainly of it. He that said (Joh. xv. 15) *All things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you*; would most certainly have made known this to them amongst other things, if he had received any commandment from God concerning it. He who, upon a much less important occasion, affectionately said to them; (Joh. xiv. 2.) *if it were not so, I would have told you*, i. e. you may depend upon my veracity and affection for you, that I would not deceive or mislead you: He would not surely have omitted to inform them, that men were to worship and pray to himself.

The improbability of our divine Master's omitting this circumstance concerning himself, if he had received any commission from
God

Jesus never taught men to pray to himself. 75

God for it, rises still higher, when we consider, that thereby he would not only mislead his disciples; (who never indeed did pray to him at all, and only to God,) but would also have misled his followers to the end of time; who would not have been justified in worshiping and praying to him, without his express authority for it.

Nor let any allege that Christ might decline speaking such great things of himself, as would have been the commanding men to worship him, out of modesty, being here in a state of humiliation; and that otherwise he would have mentioned it.

I answer; it was a point of too great moment to be waved on any such pretence. There would have been no pride or vanity in his laying claim to what was due to him, if he were to be worshiped and prayed to; and declaring it. It would have made men reverence him the more. Besides, humility belongs only to a creature. If therefore he had been the supreme God, as some say, nothing could or would, or ought to have prevented his requiring divine homage and worship to be paid to himself.

But if it be allowed, that, for some unknown reason, Christ did not chuse himself to enjoin men to worship and pray to him; yet had he not thought it a thing fitting to be mentioned by himself, he might have given it in charge to his apostles, the appointed witnesses of, and instructors in all things relating to him;

him; and they might have taught it to the world. We find however nothing of this kind in their writings. They never tell us that their Master Jesus ordered himself to be prayed to; or that they had themselves received any divine revelation concerning it; and without one or other of these, without authority from God, or from Christ, how christians could begin such a practice, or how it can be warranted, is hard to say.

SECTION IV.

The religious worship of Christ, in the offering up of prayer to him, is not deducible from his character, office, or any high divine power ascribed to him.

AS Christ never gave any command to worship himself; so can it not be collected, that he is the object of worship, from his character, or from any thing recorded of him, in the writings of the New Testament. For he never assumed the title of God; he never claimed divine honours; but *son of man*, was his usual appellation when he spoke of himself; and he set others an example of worshipping the Father alone.

Nor can the fitness of praying to Christ, be inferred from any thing said by him, of his
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great power ; or from any of his promises to his disciples, implying a divine presence, in respect of his being always with them, to hear and to help them. For upon examination, it will be found, that he says no more on such occasions, than Moses had done, who was a prophet and divine lawgiver as he was, tho' in wisdom and moral excellency, and divine powers far inferiour to him.

Thus, for instance, if Jesus says to his disciples ; (Matth. xviii. 20.) *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* : Moses makes a promise of the like sort to his disciple Joshua ; (Deut. xxxi. 23.) *And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said ; be strong and of good courage : for thou shalt bring the children of Israel unto the land which I swore unto them : and I will be with thee.*

If Jesus says, (Joh. xiv. 13, 14.) *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do ; that the Father may be glorified in the son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* Moses, even more emphatically, says the same of himself ; (Deut. xi. 13, 14, 15.) *And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God—that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season—and I will send grass in thy fields, &c. (xxix. 5, 6.) I have led you forty years in the wilderness : your clothes are not waxed old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy*

thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drank strong drink ; that ye might know that I am the Lord your God.

The truth is, the holy Jesus, after the example of other prophets of God, of Moses especially, to whom it was foretold he should be like, does not always preface what he delivers from God, with saying, that he spoke in the name of the Father ; but sometimes utters the doctrine or promise, as if the Father spake in his own person. (a) In which cases it is obvious to see that it is not Jesus or the prophet that speaks, but God in him, or by him.

This throws light on that passage, (Matth. xxviii. 18, 19, 20.) *Jesus came and spake unto them, saying ; all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age.*

This power given, (or rather (b) promised) to Christ, was not a mighty power to controul

(a) See another instance of this kind, Matth. xxxiii. 34. quoted and explained in the *Sequel to the Apology*, &c. page 371.

(b) Our Saviour here by this expression *given to him*, would have his Apostles to understand, that he had an assured promise of such power from God, to be exerted in support of the truth he had taught them, and which they were

troul men and angels, and over all nature ; but a power, bestowed merely for the purpose of *making disciples of all nations* : which are the exprefs words by which Christ himself here explains and confines it ; a promise of all needful assistance to enable his apostles, to preach the gospel effectually ; not to jews only, but to all the world. And he encourages them with the assurance, that such an extraordinary divine aid would be afforded them ; by adding, *lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age* ; i. e. (a) “ the age during which the jewish church and state were to last. And this seems to limit the promise of such assistance to that period of time.”

Not that Christ in person would be with his disciples in that interval. For he had before told them, that he should be withdrawn from them ; but in this sense he should come

were to teach to others. So, (John xvii. 22.) in his prayer to God for his faithful disciples then, and to all future time, he says ; *And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them ; that they may be one, as we are one.* i. e. “ I have promised them that they shall share in the honour and felicity of contributing to the virtue and salvation of mankind by the gospel, and thereby became united with me and Thyself, in carrying on the same glorious and benevolent design.” This was a thing not actually given to Christ, or to his disciples ; but only assured to them by the divine promise. And so it is to be taken in both instances.

(a) This is the just interpretation of that truly honest man, and learned critic, the late Bp. Pearce, in his note on the place.

to them again, and be with them, (a) as the extraordinary power and protection of God; which he had promised, would still accompany them. This promise was fulfilled, a few weeks after, by the pouring out of the gifts of the holy spirit upon the apostles, and by the miraculous powers which continued afterwards to be conferred on believers, during that period and infant-state of the church.

Since that time, Christ's power has consisted in the efficacy of his written gospel, and the powerful motives therein contained, to bring men to eternal life by the knowledge of the Father, the only true God. But from these declarations of Christ concerning his power and presence with those his first followers, they could have no more plea or pretence for praying to him, after he had left the world, than Joshua or the Israelites had for praying to Moses, from the like expressions concerning him.

(a) John xiv. 16. &c. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, (advocate, assistant) 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: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you. Yet a little while the world seeth me no more: but ye see me. xiv. 7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away the comforter (advocate, assistant,) will not come unto you: but when (not if) I depart, I will send him unto you.*

S E C T I O N V.

Jesus excludes himself from being the object of prayer.

BY always praying to the heavenly Father himself, and uniformly directing others to pray to him alone, Jesus Christ put an intire bar to the offering of religious worship to himself, or to any other person whatsoever.

He never indeed taught the jews, or his disciples, expressly, and in so many words, the worship even of Jehovah himself, the heavenly Father of all. For it would have been superfluous. They wanted no instructions from him on that head. Nevertheless, when it came in his way, as it frequently did, to treat of prayer, he always mentioned it in such a manner, as to leave no room for the least shadow of surmise or doubt, that any other person than his heavenly Father, was to be prayed to and worshiped.

Thus, in his dialogue with the woman of Samaria, when (Joh. iv. 21, 23.) he saith unto her; *woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.—But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.* Would this woman suppose, could it ever enter into the imagination of any one that reads these words, to suppose, that in the esti-

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mate of this heavenly Teacher, there was any other object of religious adoration, but the Father alone?

But in one place, the blessed Jesus is so decisive upon this point; that prayer ought to be made to the heavenly Father alone; that did we not know the force of prejudice to blind the understanding, we might wonder that any one, after reading it, could think of praying to him who delivered such doctrine; or to any other supposed Divine Person. It is in Luke xi. 1, 2. where the sacred historian relates; that "*it came to pass that as Jesus was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him; Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them; when ye pray, say; Our Father, which art in heaven, &c.*"

Upon so solemn a request as this of his disciples; *teach us to pray*: he would certainly have thought it incumbent on him, to state the objects of worship, if more than one, with precision and accuracy; as an omission in such a case, would prevent them and their converts, to the end of time, from discharging a necessary part of their duty. For this is the only formal direction they receive from him upon the subject; and their question was a general one; *Lord, teach us to pray*: not, teach us, how to pray to God the Father. And he answers them by giving them a form, or general model for their devotions, wherein prayer is addressed to the Father, and to him alone.

alone. In which also his particular enjoining of them; *when ye pray, say, our Father, which art in heaven*, applies itself to the subject of our present enquiry, as if he had said; “Our heavenly Father is the only object of prayer. Ye can go to no other but him.”

It may farther be remarked, that, in this formulary, Christ has comprehended every thing that we can want and ask of God; so as to leave us nothing to ask of any other Being. Why then go to any other? why multiply objects of worship without need, as well as without cause or sufficient warrant? What have we to ask of Christ, which we are not by him commanded to ask of God? and therefore ought to ask of him, unless Christ has enjoined us to pray to himself, to the exclusion of the Father; or drawn the line, and given specific directions, what requests we are to prefer to the Father, what to himself. But we have shewn, that he has done no such thing; that he has made no partition of divine worship, betwixt himself and the Father; but as he uniformly and invariably adored the Father himself, he has by this his example, and in many other ways, directed us to adore the Father alone, and no other.

SECTION VI.

The apostles never teach that prayer was to be offered to Christ.

THE apostles of Christ, who were intrusted by a divine designation from him, to teach his doctrine to the world, in their discourses and letters to various people of different nations, which they have left behind them, never once deliver any precept concerning the worship of him, or the offering of prayer to him.

We have seen above, that this was never taught, in any shape or degree, by Christ himself. But we may go farther, and from the silence of his apostles, fully conclude, that it made no part of his private instructions to them at any time. For they would never have been so negligent and unfaithful in what so immediately concerned his honour, whom they so much loved and revered, as to omit a matter of so much moment; and therefore we may be sure that they had no commission concerning it, that they knew not of any duty or obligation to worship and pray to their divine Master, and had nothing of the kind to teach the world.

We may particularly infer this from his last farewell direction to his apostles; (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.) *Go ye, and make disciples of all nations; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* For as we never

ver find that they gave it in command from Christ, that he was to be worshiped or prayed to ; we may absolutely conclude that they never received any such command. So that whoever prays to Christ, does it without any authority from him or his apostles.

But although his apostles have not directly taught, that their heavenly Master was to be prayed to and worshiped ; it has been presumed that they have given examples of it in their own practice, or spoken of it indirectly in such terms, as sufficiently to ascertain it to be a christian duty.

Some might doubt, whether evidence of this kind alone would be satisfactory, and sufficient to bear a man out, in bringing in a new Deity, or at least a new object of divine worship, unsupported by any precept, or direction, from Christ himself. For surely his apostles ought to have made known the one or the other to us, to authorise such a practice. The example and authority of the Master, in such a case, would be above that of the disciple. We should be apt to say ; Christ never taught that himself was to be worshiped ; nor do his apostles say, that he ever did so teach : it is therefore safest for us to be guided by him. But in truth we shall find, that there is no clashing between them, in this respect. Both Christ and his apostles agree in the fullest harmony with each other, that the Father alone is God, and to be worshiped. Others only have misapprehended and misconstrued their words.

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SECTION VII.

There is no sufficient precedent or example of praying to Jesus Christ, recorded in the writings of the New Testament.

*C*ertain supposed instances of religious worship offered to Christ, or implied in the language used concerning him, in the book of the Acts.

Acts i. 24, 25. *And they prayed and said; Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew, whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship.*

To those, who, from their infancy, have been accustomed to hear, and to offer prayers equally to Jesus Christ, as to God himself; it is easy to imagine, that he is the person intended to be addressed, whenever the ambiguous use of a word, as in the present instance, gives a handle to it; and they will be the more apt to catch at such instances, to countenance them in their worship of Christ, if they be rarely to be met with.

The word *Lord*, *Κυριε*, here used, in the language in which St. Luke wrote, is put indifferently for Christ, and for other men, as well as for almighty God himself. Thus Joh. xx. 13. Mary Magdalene, after Christ's death, looking into the sepulchre for his body, says to some that asked her what she was seeking,

ing, "*they have taken away my Lord,* τοῦ κυρίου μᾶς and presently after, she addresses a person whom she took to be the gardener; *Lord,* Κυρίου but which we have well translated, *Sir, if thou have borne him hence, &c.*"

Κυρίου, *Lord*, was indeed the ordinary term of salutation and respect amongst them, as *Sir* is with us. It was also a common honorary appellation of Jesus Christ, which God had dignified him with, and confirmed to him, Luke ii. 11. Acts ii. 36. It was moreover on some occasions, assumed by Christ himself, as denoting his dignity and authority from God, Joh. xiii. 13. And it was on the same account, the usual stile of address of his apostles to him, implying their acknowledgement of his divine character and office. So the term *Saviour*, in the scriptures, is similarly applied to men, to Christ, and to God; but yet in the New Testament it is peculiarly appropriated to Christ.

But to judge of the apostles' application of the word *Lord*, in the instance before us, whether it be to Christ or to God; we should put ourselves in their place, and recollect that they were utter strangers to that polytheism which now prevails among christians. They had no notion of two or three divine persons, who were each of them God. So far from being in the habit of praying to divers objects of worship, they would entertain a horror of praying to any but Jehovah, the heavenly Father.

They knew no other God, besides Jehovah, who was the searcher of hearts, whatever high degree of this knowledge he might have communicated to their master Jesus; no other that heard, or could hear, the prayers of his creatures. Jesus had given them no open or secret orders to pray to himself. If he had done this, they would have been most careless men, and ungrateful to him, not to have told it to us. We may therefore assuredly conclude, that it is not to Christ, that the apostles address their prayer at this time, because they had no authority for it; and we cannot suppose them to have done such a thing of themselves: and also, because the language they use, *thou who knowest the hearts of all*; καρδιαγνοσα παντων is applicable to God only. Is there any being, but one, who knows the hearts of all?

A solemn act of worship, in which the apostles were engaged soon after, will give farther confirmation to this reasoning, if any can be needed; that Christ was not *the Lord*, to whom prayer was now offered.

Acts iv. 24, &c. *And they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said; Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said; why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?*

things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy servant Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word; by stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy servant Jesus!

The word *child*, in our present version, (a very improper term surely for the apostles to have used upon such an occasion) is here changed into *servant*, which is the true translation; for the following reasons;

1. *Servant* is the signification of the word $\pi α ι ς$ here used, universally, with very few exceptions, in the numerous places in the which it is found in the lxx version of the old Testament.

2. The same word, $\pi α ι ς$, is translated *servant* in the New Testament, in the following places, Matth. viii. 6. xiv. 2. Luke i. 54. xii. 45. xv. 26, and vii. 7. where it is explained by $\delta α λ ο ς$, ver. 3.

3. I do not find the word $\pi α ι ς$ put for *child* in the New Testament, unless where the age is specified, or there be some other circumstances to mark, that it is a young person that is spoken of; as Matth. ii. 16. Luke ii. 43. viii.

43. viii. 51, 54. But Acts xx. 9, 12, it should be translated, *servant*.

4. But what puts the point past all doubt, is, that in this very prayer, the same word is used in speaking of David, verse 25. ο δια σωματος Δαβιδ τε παιδος σε ειπων, *who by the mouth of David thy servant hast said*; as is used of Christ himself, επι του αγιου παιδα σε—τε αγιου παιδος and surely it ought to have been translated, in the latter instances, as in the former; viz. *against thy holy servant Jesus, in the name of thy holy servant Jesus*. For the same reasons, our english translation should be amended in Acts iii. 13, 26. and run thus—*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified his servant Jesus. And unto you first, God having raised up his servant Jesus, sent him to bless you.*

Here then, in this prayer, the apostles address God, Κυrie, (ver. 29.) as in the foregoing, and they call Jesus twice his *holy servant*.

Now what I would infer hence, is, the utter improbability that the same men should a few weeks before have offered up prayer to him, whom they now declare to be God's servant, as David was; yet most justly distinguishing him, as his *holy servant*; in moral excellency, in dignity and authority from God, highly surpassing David and all others of mankind.

And moreover, what should alter their minds in so short a space, that they should not continue to pray to Jesus, if they had done

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it before? For what they now asked, as much concerned his religion, and it equally belonged to his department to have interposed in it, as that which was before requested, if he had had any thing to do with their prayers, if he had been the person to whom they were to make their supplications for any thing.

Acts vii. 59.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!

I see nothing that can be added, or that needeth to be added, to what I have said of this address of Stephen's, in a former work. *Sequel, &c. p. 69, &c.*

His single example, moreover, however it be understood, can be no precedent for others to follow, unsupported by any precept or direction of Christ, or the practice of his apostles. Not long recovered out of a trance, in which I had *seen the heavens opened, and the son of man standing at the right hand of God*: in such a situation, my imagination heated with the animating visionary scene, and ruffled and agitated by the ill usage of the murdering ruffians in whose hands I was; I might perhaps have done, as Stephen did. But waking, and with cool reflection, my New Testament opened before me, where I beheld Jesus ever praying himself to the Father, invariably directing those about him so to do, and never
in

in the most distant manner intimating, that himself was the object of prayer; where too I observed his apostles, who were commissioned to teach his religion to the world, constantly praying to God, and not to their Master Jesus, and never instructing men to pray to any but God; I could surely never have any inducement to pray to any but the common God and Father, of Jesus, and of all mankind. I know that Luther, and many other wise and good men, have adopted those words of Stephen, in their last moments; “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*” And Socinus, that christian Reformer, in many respects more enlightened than Luther himself, might and probably did thus recommend his spirit to Christ, at leaving the world, consonantly with his firm persuasion, that Jesus, though a mere man, might be prayed to: For it is related of his pious daughter, that she expired, commending her spirit to the Saviour (a). But the authority of Jesus and his apostles is to be preferred. These excellent persons, in praying to Jesus, prayed to one, who never told them to pray to him, or that he could hear their prayers. They should have prayed according to his direction, to God, who could both hear, and help them. And his own example is safest to be followed in that dark hour, and at all hours; *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!* Luke xxiii. 46.

Acts

(a) Toulmin's Memoirs, page 15.

Acts ix. 14. 21. *And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.*

Is not this he which destroyed them that called on this name in Jerusalem?

In the first of these passages, a certain disciple called Ananias, is introduced speaking to Christ; who had appeared in a vision to him. The latter, contains a question asked by some jewish christians. The design of both, is evidently to point out Saul, (who afterwards took the name of Paul,) as a persecutor of the followers of Jesus. The only difficulty is in the language, whereby St. Luke defines these followers of Jesus; namely, persons who *called upon his name*; as it is in our english translation. From which, those who examine no farther, take it for granted, that praying to Christ was common in the apostles' days; because that is the usual signification of the phrase *calling upon his name*, with us.

There are two circumstances which afford a strong presumption, that this cannot be the true meaning of the phrase.

1. For, first, it is not a true description of christians at that time, that they were men, who in this sense *called upon the name of Christ*; or prayed to him. Because, as we have shewn above, Christ never enjoined himself to be prayed to; but prayed himself to the heavenly Father, and directed his disciples to pray to him; and therefore, if any did it, it must have been of themselves, without any leave
or

94 *No sufficient example, in the New*

or authority from him. And his apostles, in agreement with him, never taught that men were to offer prayer to their divine Master Jesus; nor ever prayed to him themselves. St. Luke therefore, upon this face of things, cannot be supposed to represent christians under the denomination of worshipers of Christ; men who prayed to him. For this would fix a degree of negligence, and ignorance of the gospel upon him, which is not to be imputed to so accurate and well-informed a writer.

2. *Calling upon the name of Christ in prayer*, was not the crime for which these men were persecuted; was not that which excited against them, the chief priests, and such warm zealots for the law, as Saul was at that time. Let them have worshiped Christ, or prayed to him ever so much, it would not have raised their spleen; they would never have been offended with them, or have disturbed them for it. But it was their *speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus*, (as it is expressed in this chapter a little lower, ver. 29.) with a view to convert their countrymen to acknowledge his name, or authority from God; that gave offence. In short, it was openly acknowledging and publishing that Jesus was the Messiah; and professing themselves to be the followers of this crucified Saviour; that so incensed the rulers of their country against them, as men that intended *to bring his blood upon them*; (Acts v. 38.) which is the very allegation of these rulers against them. So that they

they did not forbid the apostles, to pray, but to *speak or teach in the name of Jesus*; (Acts iv. 17, 18. v. 28, 40, 41.) i. e. to endeavour to make men his disciples.

Thus it is seen to be a thing quite improbable, that St. Luke should in this place, or at any other time, denominate christians by the title of worshipers of Christ, or offerers up of prayer to him. Since he never informs us any where, that Christ enjoined it; nor gives us cause to conclude, that he ever prayed to him himself, or knew of any that did pray to him.

Our next inquiry will be into the meaning of the phrase, *ἐπικαλεσθαι τὸ ὄνομα* in the original; as St. Luke here defines christians to be men, *ἐπικαλημένοι τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ*.

It is without all doubt sometimes to be rendered actively, *calling upon the name*, &c. and then it is used in the middle voice: as for example, Acts xxii. 16.—*arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*—*ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Κυρίου*. i. e. (a) offering up thy prayer to Almighty

(a) Grotius, upon this passage, having mentioned that some M.SS. and the Syriac version, read here, calling upon *his* name—observes farther upon it; *Id alii ad Jesum referunt: ego rectius ad Deum Patrem. Sæpe enim demonstrativa et relativa respiciunt aliquid remotius. Cur ita censeam, causam vide in iis, quæ diximus at Matth. xxviii. 19. ubi agimus de precibus in baptismo.*

God,

God, which was the practice in the earliest ages, when any were baptised.

But in the two instances before us, *ἐπικαλεομαι* is used in the passive signification; and the right translation will be—*here be bath authority from the chief priests to bind all that are called by thy name. Is not this he which destroyed them who are called by this name in Jerusalem.*

The language is elliptical; and probably to be supplied by the preposition *κατα*. Of which we have continual instances in profane authors. Nor are they wanting in the New Testament. Thus Matth. xvi. 26. *την ψυχην αυτη ζημιωθη*: and Luke xii. 47. *δαρησεται πολλας*.

A learned friend and good critic, has observed in support of this construction and interpretation (a); “He would give no forced interpretation to the expression, who should translate *της επικαλυμμενης το ονομα σε*, Acts ix. 14. and *τοις επικαλυμμενοις το ονομα τε Κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου*, 1 Cor. i. 2. *those who are called or surnamed after thy name; those who are called after the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is no uncommon construction of greek passive verbs, and is to the full as grammatical, as (*Ισδαιοι*) *επισευθησαν τα λογια τε θεου*. Rom. iii. 2. or *οικονομιαν πεπιστευμαι*, 1 Cor. ix. 17.”

It may be remarked, in farther support of this construction, that Patrick, Le Clerc, Calmet, with many other commentators of

(a) Objections to Mr. Lindsey's interpretation of the four first verses of St. John's gospel, p. 60.

note,

note, prefer that translation of Genesis iv. 26. which makes it; *then began men to be called by the name of the Lord*; and not, as we render it, *then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*. The marginal translation of our english bibles, which is generally to be preferred, gives us, *then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord*. The lxx reads, ετος ηλπισεν επικαλεισθαι το ονομα τς Κυρις.

This interpretation, and manner of characterising the followers of Christ, as persons *called by his name*, is countenanced and confirmed by similar examples, which we meet with in the apostles' writings, conveyed indeed in different words, but exactly of the same import; which sheweth, that it was a mode of description very familiar to them.

Thus, 2 Tim. ii. 19. αποστητω απο αδικιας πας ο ονομαζων το ονομα χριστ· *let every one that nameth the name of Christ, which answers to let every one that is called by the name of Christ, & part from iniquity*. And Rom. xv. 20. φιλοτιμημενον ευαγγελιζεσθαι, εκ οπου ονομασθη ο χριστος. *I have strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named*; i. e. not where there were any called by the name of Christ, where there were christians already. And James ii. 7. εκ υτοι βλασφημεσι το καλον ονομα το επικληθεν εφ' υμας; *do not they blaspheme that honourable name by which ye are called?*

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I Cor.

I Cor. i. 1, 2.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosibenes our brother; unto the church of God, which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord; both their's and our's.

In the original, the last clause stands thus :
 συν πασι τοις επικαλυμενοις το ονομα τῆ Κυριας ημων Ιησου
 χριστου, εν παντι τοπω, αυτων τε και ημων. The lan-
 guage is the same with that which we have
 just now been discussing, (in *Acts ix. 14. 21.*)
 and is to be alike translated here, viz.—*with
 all that in every place are called by the name of
 Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's ;
 or, our common Lord.* For the apostle ma-
 nifestly uses it as a periphrasis for christians,
 synonymous with several others, at the same
 time introduced by him.

And moreover, for many of the reasons
 above assigned with respect to St. Luke, our
 apostle cannot be supposed here to define
 christians, as a sect who offered up prayer to
 Jesus Christ; because he has no where made
 this their distinguishing characteristic; but
 quite the reverse. For he has no where taught
 that prayer was to be offered to Christ by his
 followers. He has given no instance of him-
 self or others praying to him, except one or
 two very ambiguous ones at best. I should
 rather

rather have said, such as are either in truth no addressees at all to Christ, but to God ; or, if to Christ, such as by no means argue him to be the object of prayer, or are precedents for others to follow.

The apostles' salutations at the beginning and ending of their epistles, have been imagined by some persons to favour the doctrine of praying to Christ. I shall produce the different samples of each, from which we shall best be able to judge of the intent of the writers.

Greetings at the beginning of the epistles,

Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 3. &c. &c. &c. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Tim. i. 2. *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Pet. i. 2. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2 Joh. ver. 3. *Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the Father, in truth and love.*

Jude, ver. 2. *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*

Revelat. i. 4. *Grace be unto you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to*

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come ;

100 *No sufficient example, in the New
come; and from the seven spirits which are be-
fore his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faith-
ful witness.*

Farewel-salutations at the end of the epistles.

Rom. xv. 35. *The God of peace be with you all.*
— xvi. 24. *The grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ be with you all.*

1 Cor. xvi. 23, 24. *The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you
all in Christ Jesus.*

2 Cor. xiii. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jesus
Christ, and the love of God, and the communion
of the holy Spirit, be with you all.*

Gal. vi. 18, *Brethren, the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

Eph. vi. 23, 24. *Peace be to the brethren,
and love with faith from God the Father, and
the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Coloss. iv. 18. *Grace be with you.*

1 Tim. vi. 21. *Grace be with thee.*

2 Tim. iv. 22. *The Lord Jesus Christ be
with thy spirit. Grace be with you.*

Titus iii. 15. *Grace be with you all.*

Philem. ver. 25. *The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

1 Pet. v. 14. *Peace be with you all that are
in Christ Jesus.*

3 Joh. ver. 14. *Peace be to thee.*

If men had not been disposed beforehand,
through the force and tinge of former preju-
dices, to multiply to themselves objects of
worship,

worship, they never would have espied any thing in these forms of salutations, in which Christ is named, to countenance their offering up prayer to him. For they are not wishes for any thing directly to be received from him; but each of them contains a general wish of all the blessings of the gospel, couched in the most concise manner, as is the usual method of epistolary writings. In short, they are imperfect kinds of prayer, which require in some such way as this, to be made out and compleated. Thus, *Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ*, would have been, if written more at length; "I pray God to grant, that ye may be partakers of that grace, (favour) and peace, (perfect happiness) which he, the Father of all, has bestowed on us by Jesus Christ." In the same way, that valedictory salutation, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. is to be supplied. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy spirit, be with you all:* i. e. "I pray God that ye may be all partakers of the favour, which his love has bestowed upon us by Jesus Christ, and that ye may share in the extraordinary gifts, and all needful assistance of his holy spirit. In like manner, 2 Tim. iv. 22. *The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you;* if written more fully, would have been; "I pray God, that the gracious motives of the gospel may be thy guide and support, and that the divine favour made known to us by Christ may belong to you all."

The Lord Jesus Christ, in this last instance, is put for his gospel; the doctrine which he delivered from God to men, which is capable of affording the highest comfort here, and qualifies them for a virtuous happiness with God for ever. It is a frequent way of speaking with our apostle. Eph. iii. 17. He tells the persons to whom he writes, that he prays for them, that *Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith*: every one must perceive that he means his holy doctrine, not Christ himself. The same is signified, in like manner, a little lower, in the same epistle, where he says, iv. 20. *Ye have not so learned Christ*. So also, Philip. iv. 13. *I can do all things thro' Christ which strengtheneth me*: not Christ himself acting upon him, but the powerful motives of the gospel. See also, Hebr. xiii. 8. It is likewise language countenanced and used by our Saviour himself. Joh. xii. 32. a little before his death, alluding to the happy consequences of it to the world, he says, *And I, (a) when I shall be lifted up, (i. e. on the cross) will draw all men unto me*. He speaks here not of any agency of his own, but of the effects of his gospel; by which many would be induced to become his disciples. Bp. Pearce paraphrases this latter clause—“I will by the

(a) Not if I be lifted up, as our translation has it, as though it were a doubtful event, καγω εαν υψωθω εκ της γης but εαν here is *when*, as is translated, 1 John iii. 2. οίδαμεν δε οτι εαν φανερωθῃ, *we know that when he shall appear*.

gospel

“gospel convert multitudes, and bring them
“into my kingdom.”

Perhaps by putting a similar example, it will still more easily be seen, that these forms of writing, can by no means be considered in the light of addresses by prayer to Christ. It has been the opinion of some learned men among christians, as it had been of some jewish writers, that Moses, like Enoch, was translated to heaven without seeing death. Let us then only suppose this to be true, which I do not affirm; and that Joshua, Moses's successor, instead of that fine exhortation to his countrymen before his death, (Josh. xxiii.) should have written an epistle to the Israelites, and prefaced it thus; “*Mercy and peace be to you, from Jehovah our God, and Moses our Deliverer.*” Would any have thence concluded, that the man Moses was to be prayed to and worshiped as God? I suppose not. They would have taken it only as a pious wish, or prayer of the good old man for them, to God, that they might enjoy the blessings he had promised them by Moses. Why then conclude any thing more intended here?

Of the doxologies applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

It was natural for the apostles and first preachers of the gospel, who had seen and known their lord and master Jesus, and been

so highly preferred, and distinguished by him, to be continually making mention of him, and striving to bring all persons equally with themselves, to love and reverence him, as above all others, and next to the heavenly Father, deserving the gratitude, veneration and esteem of the whole human race. They could seldom speak, or think of God, but the loved and honoured name of Jesus would occur, and became associated with it, as the instrument under him of the greatest blessings to mankind; by his voluntary labours and sufferings, to recover them to virtue and their true happiness. But altho' they knew, that he was not suffered to remain among the dead, like the rest of mankind, but was speedily restored to life, and advanced in the nearer presence and favour of God; they did not think this intitled him, or put him in a capacity to hear their prayers. For we never meet with any prayer or address made by them to him, after he had left this lower world, unless when he was represented in a vision as present, which was the case of Paul and Ananias. Acts ix. 4, 5, 6, 10, 15. xxii. 17, 21. And something of the same kind may well be presumed, as has been shewn, in respect of Stephen. Acts vii. 59. The like may be said of that emblematic description of the homage due to this glorious and innocent sufferer, in the cause of truth, and of God; Revel. iv. 8, 9, 10, &c. *The four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb;*

Lamb, having every one of them harps; and golden vials, full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sung a new song, saying; *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, &c.*

His disciples indeed, and others oftentimes worshiped him their lord and master, when he was alive and with them upon earth; yet it was not with a divine religious worship, but such as was usually paid to persons of high station and superiour worth; as *the servant*, (Matth. xviii. 26.) *fell down and worshiped his lord*, and king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. ii. 48.) *fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel.*

But it must be owing to a very confused and indistinct way of thinking, when from the worship paid to Christ on such occasions, and in such circumstances, as those above-mentioned, it is inferred, that he is to be worshiped and prayed to at all times. It is the like absurdity, as it would have been for an Israelite to have maintained that they were to pay religious worship to David their king, because in one place it was written; *And all the congregation blessed the LORD (Jehovah) the God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshiped the LORD (Jehovah) and the king (David).* 1 Chron. xxix. 20.

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The true conclusion to be drawn from the conduct of the apostles in this matter, is, that they had no conception of the blessed Jesus, knowing their thoughts, or hearing their prayers, unless when upon some extraordinary occasions it was given to him, and he was permitted to manifest himself as present with them.

If the present be the reading of that perplexed passage, Revel. i. 4, 5, 6; whoever has that love and veneration, which will ever be due to the blessed Jesus, cannot hesitate in admitting the latter clause in it, as a doxology to him, viz. *Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*

But this, and that other, 2 Peter iii. 18. *To him be glory both now and for ever;* are the only doxologies applied to Christ in the New Testament. And they are to be interpreted in the same way with the salutations from Christ, treated of in the foregoing chapter; as a brief and summary form of prayer, in which God is understood to be addressed, so to direct and overrule the affairs of the world, to do honour to Jesus, that all men may receive his gospel, and be made virtuous, and happy for ever, by it.

2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. *For this king I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.*

And

And he said unto me; My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

To know whom our apostle here addresses himself to, we must consider the whole of the history with which it is connected.

It was St. Paul's fate, as of his great master before him, to be ill used and opposed by many of those whom he sought to serve and to save. In the church, or christian society at Corinth, which he himself had first planted, there sprung up a party adverse to him; consisting mostly of jewish members, who were displeased that he did not require the heathen converts to conform to the law of Moses. They therefore endeavoured to depreciate his character, as ignorant of the christian doctrine, and as one who had thrust himself uncalled, into the office of an apostle. And to them were joined some of the heathen converts themselves; who were dissatisfied with our apostle, for his want of that eloquence, which they had been used to; and for setting no value on their false philosophy, which they had already begun to mix with the doctrines of the gospel. This constrained him unwillingly to make mention of himself, of his disinterested labours, and sufferings for the truth, and of the extraordinary marks of the divine approbation, which he had received, in the wonderful revelations that had been
vouch-

vouchsafed to him. And yet he modestly checks himself, as if he had gone too far, in barely hinting at such things in his own commendation; and therefore tells them; that though some of them might despise him for it, he was not less thankful for a visitation of another kind, a bodily infirmity, which he calls *a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan*; with which he had been afflicted by divine providence; and which he looked upon as not more than necessary, to keep him humble, in the midst of such extraordinary favours from heaven. And it is ingeniously conjectured (a), that this infirmity was some paralytic disorder, and the natural consequence of the splendour of those divine visions, with which he had been favoured, too great for the mortal frame to sustain unhurt; which had affected his countenance and organs of speech. (See and compare Gal. iv. 13, 14. 1 Cor. ii. 3. 2 Cor. x. 10.

This could not but be a great affliction to him; but chiefly as he might apprehend it would hinder his success in preaching, and spreading the gospel of divine truth: for which only he desired to live. He therefore naturally turned himself for relief, to the almighty being, to the LORD, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, the Maker and Governour of the world. He had been accustomed to pray to no other from his youth. His divine Master

(a) *Farmer*, on the Demoniacs of the New Testament, page 18, 19.

Jesus had not taught, or commanded to pray to any other; much less to pray to himself. And in *beseeking the Lord thrice*, he seems to have had in his eye the example of the holy Jesus, in his distress of spirit, the night before he suffered; when he is recorded, three several times, with deep earnestness, to have prayed to the heavenly Father, and *was heard*, (Heb. v. 7.) *for his piety, an angel from heaven* being sent to strengthen him. Luke xxii.

43. His faithful apostle also was assured of the favourable acceptance of his prayers, in the like miraculous sort, by a voice from heaven; or in what ever way soever were conveyed to him, those words, which he here repeats; viz. *My grace is sufficient for thee*. q. d. "It is sufficient for you, that you are assured of my favour and protection. Only do your duty, and leave the rest to me. *For my strength, δυναμις, is made perfect in weakness.*" (a) i. e. the extraordinary divine powers which will be occasionally continued to you, for the confirmation of the truth, will be more conspicuous during your present bodily indisposition. For whilst you are able to heal others, but not to heal yourself; it will be more evident that you act by a power not your own, nor under your own direction; but from God only.

I have explained this prayer, as being offered to God alone: that he is *the Lord*, to whom the pious apostle had recourse. But some are in-

(a) The term, *δυναμις*, in the New Testament, is commonly used to signify miraculous works and powers.

duced

110 *No sufficient example, in the New*
duced by an expression that follows, to imagine that he prayed to Christ; because he calls the assistance now promised to him, *the power of Christ*.

But there appears to me no sufficient ground for this interpretation. For the *power of Christ* may, very properly, and agreeably with the usual stile of the New Testament, signify the power of God, displayed in support of the gospel of Christ; and not the act of Christ himself.

Thus he says to his disciples; Luke xxi. 14, 15. *Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before, what ye shall answer. For I will give you a mouth, or wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, or resist.* But he thus expresses the same promise; Matth. x. 19, 20. *When they deliver you up, be not anxious how, or what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak; but the spirit of your Father, that speaketh in you.* And Mark xiii. 11. *it is not ye that speak; but the holy spirit.*

Hence we learn that Christ does any thing; it may be said to be effected by his power; when it is done by the spirit, or power of God, in fulfilment of Christ's promise.

So he tells them, Joh. xiv. 13, 14. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.— If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* But a little after in the same farewell-conversation with his disciples, he adds; xvi. 23. *In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you; whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

Observe

Observe here also ; that when Christ said, that at his disciples' request, he would cause miraculous works to be done in confirmation of the gospel ; (for these are the things which he here speaks of, which they were to ask in his name) he explains himself, that he did not thereby mean that he himself should do the works, but his heavenly Father : who would realize this his promise to them.

In like manner, in his last discourse with his disciples, which principally turns upon the miraculous power for the propagation and support of the gospel, which would be bestowed upon them ; which power he distinguishes, by the names of *the Comforter*, (or rather, the Advocate), *the Spirit of truth*, *the Holy Spirit* ; and speaks of it as a Divine Person ; he says, John xvi. 8. *I will send him unto you : xvi. 26. whom I will send unto you from the Father.* And Peter, with the other apostles, preaching to the jews, concerning this holy spirit, or miraculous power, on the very day of Pentecost, when it was first given to the apostles, tells them ; Acts ii. 33. that *Jesus, having received of the Father, the promise of the holy spirit, hath shed forth this (divine power of speaking divers languages), which ye now see and hear.*

But Christ himself also says, John xiv. 16. *I will pray the Father, and he will give you another comforter.* And ver. 26 ; *the comforter, which is the holy spirit, whom THE FATHER will send in my name.*

So

So then, according to this his own most express interpretation, when Christ spoke of his sending this divine power to his followers, he did not thereby intend to signify any act of his own : but it was spoken by him, in the name of God, as his prophet, and sent by him ; to signify, that God himself would surely accomplish that which he had promised in his name. And this we shewed above, was a very usual form of speech with God's former messengers, the ancient prophets.

From all these instances, we are led to conclude, that the *power of Christ*, in the passage under consideration, *η δυναμις τοῦ Χριστοῦ*, the power of doing miraculous works in confirmation of the gospel ; which was here promised to the apostle Paul, in answer to his prayer ; was not any thing to be directly and immediately derived from Christ ; but from God, in fulfilment of his gracious promises by Christ, and for the support of his doctrine : and therefore no conclusion can hence be formed, that Christ was the Lord, whom Paul besought or prayed to, at this time.

The like interpretation is to be made of that *power of our Lord Jesus Christ*, which St. Paul speaks of 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ ; to deliver such an one unto Satan,*
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for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

We have here an example of the discipline and practice of christian societies or churches, in the apostolic times, founded on that injunction and promise made by Christ to his apostles, in the name of Almighty God; (Matth. xviii. 19, 20) *Again I say unto you; that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

Amidst that variety of miraculous works, by which the truth of the gospel was at first confirmed, it pleased the divine providence sometimes to interpose for the immediate punishment of scandalous offenders amongst it's professors. This seems to have been wisely ordered; to deter bad men from adjoining themselves to the followers of Christ; and to prevent any immoral practices among themselves, which might have brought undeserved discredit on the truth of God in those early times, and hindered its reception in the world. But this power of inflicting punishment on such persons, was not a thing to be exercised at the discretion of private christians; no not even the apostles themselves. Nor indeed were any miraculous powers at their absolute command, to be used as they pleased; but only when they had an extraordinary direc-
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tion for it. And this seems to have been generally signified to them, by some impulse made in their minds, in their prayers to God ; by which it was made known to them, that such a power in a particular instance, would be given them. This, the apostle James, speaking of the actual exercise of it, calls ; (v. 15.) *the prayer of faith*. And our Saviour himself refers to it, in his exhortation to his disciples, Mark xi. 22, 23, 24.

This extraordinary power, in the present instance, to be used for the purpose of christian discipline ; is that which St. Paul is here treating of, and directing the process, (a) how it

(a) The process, according to the apostles' direction, was as follows. When the society was assembled for christian worship, they were to offer up prayer, in a solemn manner, to Almighty God ; and beseech him, that if the person, openly and scandalously offending, could not otherwise be prevailed upon to quit his evil practices ; that it would please him, the merciful Father of his creatures, to visit him with such severer dispensations, as he should see to be effectual, to bring him to a penitent sense of his crime, and to forsake it ; that he might not finally perish----*To deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

This present punishment of wicked christians, by the extraordinary power of God, was of course confined to that first period of the gospel, when alone such extraordinary divine interposition took place. It is here stiled, *the delivering a man unto Satan, for the punishment of the flesh* ; according to the popular language, (So Satan is said to have entered into Judas, Luke xxii. 3.) and the vulgar notion, that a good God could not be the author of pain and suffering : but that it proceeded from a Being wholly evil, and

it was to be exercised upon one of the society, who had been guilty of a great (a) enormity,

and disposed to and delighting in nothing but evil; who had power to draw innocent creatures to sin, and to inflict diseases and misery on them. But a sounder philosophy and more exact inquiry into facts, and into the system to which we belong, has discovered to unprejudiced minds, that there are no traces or appearances of any such evil being in the world of nature around us; but that there is a general benevolent design, manifest throughout all things, even in those that at first sight appear evil and mischievous; and the whole universe is not unworthy of a Being perfectly good. And it might be shewn, that the sacred writings, which reveal to us the mind and will of God, and the methods of his government, fall in with this amiable character of the great creator, and of his visible works: and moreover, that they give no just countenance to the belief of any such evil being really existing, whom we call *the Devil* or *Satan*: but that when such a being is named, as he sometimes is named; the sacred writers use the term, in conformity to the ignorance and prejudices of the times in which they respectively lived. Thus for instance, Christ and his apostles, use the common language of the times, in speaking of some particular diseases, as if they were owing to devils, or dæmons, as it should be translated, i. e. the spirits of the dead, possessing men's bodies, and tormenting them, although there never was any such thing as these possessions. But the whole took its rise from the idolatry and superstition of the heathens, who believed their deities, which had been formerly men, Jupiter, Apollo, &c. to be invested with such powers, after death.

(a) It was a man's living in incestuous commerce with his father's wife; not while she was his father's wife, for then the apostle would have called it *adultery*, and not *fornication*; but after she had divorced herself from him. This St. Paul says, was a crime that was not even among the gentiles; i. e. those of Corinth, the grecian gentiles; to whom he writes. But it was but too common, and far from having any stain of infamy upon it, among the Persians and Egyptians.

and was abetted in it by some amongst them. And he calls it, *the power of our Lord Jesus Christ*, not as implying any immediate act of Christ, but as it was the power of God exerted in support of his gospel. I find Bp. Pearce, on the place, paraphrases it; "the power which our Lord Jesus Christ left to his church."

That I may omit nothing, which may tend to illustrate these parts of scripture, which have been thought to favour the doctrine of praying to Christ; I would add, that some learned men, very conversant in the scriptures of the New Testament, have thought, that there was good cause to believe, that during the continuance of miraculous powers to christians, there was some kind of immediate agency and direction, committed to Christ for their benefit: as we find, in fact that he did particularly manifest himself, and interfere in the direction of the apostles, in some instances. And that therefore, under this particular presumption and persuasion, St. Paul, to whom he had often so manifested himself, might sometimes be led to pray to him, on especial occasions: himself and others so praying to Christ, if ever they did it, being prompted to it by some secret impression made upon their minds: but that ordinarily, and at all other times, they made their supplications only to God.

If any should prefer this way of interpretation, as affording a juster and more satisfactory solution of the language of the New Testament,

tament, in some places, concerning Christ; it scarce needs to be observed, that it holds forth no precedent for praying to him now. For those miraculous powers, and Christ's immediate interposition and agency, whatever it was, were to last only during that first age of our religion, being fixed and limited (a) to it expressly by himself, in that parting declaration to his disciples; (Matth. xxviii. 20.) *lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age.* And in fact, from that period, for these last 1700 years, we know of no miracles, or any of any appearance of Christ, which we can depend upon. So that to pray to Christ now, is to pray to one, whom we have no warrant so to address, either from himself, or his apostles; nor any cause whatever to believe that he hears us.

1 Theff. iii. 11. *Now God himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.*

This pious desire of the apostle, seems not unlike his general salutation, at the beginning of his epistles; viz. *Grace be to you, and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

A little before, (ii. 18.) he had mentioned his intention of going to these Thessalonians, *once and again; but Satan* (says he) *hindered*

(a) See above, pag. 79.

us: i. e. the persecuting jews, or some other enemy; whom he calls by the name of *Satan*. In this passage, he devoutly wishes, or prays, for the removal of every obstacle to his design of visiting them in person, and preaching the gospel, as he hoped, with success, among them. And it is to be considered, as a brief unfinished prayer, adapted to the stile of epistles, or familiar conversation. Had he uttered it in a more formal manner, it might have been; "I pray God, our heavenly Father, to favour me with a prosperous journey to you; and that it may turn out to the advancement of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God directed the apostle's way, when by his all-ruling providence, he disposed all things for his safe arrival amongst them. Jesus Christ is oftentimes put for that divine truth of the gospel, which he taught to men. (See above, pag. 102.) And therefore Christ might be said to direct the apostle's way, when the belief of the gospel was promoted by his coming, and preaching to them.

So, as it seems, would the christian people, to whom St. Paul writes. understand him, when he talked of Christ directing his way to them. As he had never taught them that Christ was to be prayed unto, they would be far from thinking that he himself would ask any thing of him in prayer. And so would christians of later times have understood him, if they had not unfortunately been nursed in
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the practice of praying to other Persons, besides the almighty Father; and therefore eager to lay hold of every twig, however weak and slender, that might seem to support such a practice.

The same interpretation is to be given of 2 Theff. ii. 16, 17. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through his favour, comfort your hearts, and establish you, in every good word and work.*

1 Theff. iii. 12, 13. *And the Lord make you to increase, and abound, in love one towards another, and towards all men; even as we do towards you: To the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.*

2 Theff. iii. 5. *And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

In these and the like passages, in the writings of the New Testament, where the word *Κυριος*, Lord, occurs, promiscuously applied to God and to Christ, there can be no difficulty in determining to which of them it belongs; where any are careful to distinguish betwixt the creator and the creature, betwixt Jehovah,

the sovereign Lord of all, and sole object of religious adoration and prayer, and Jesus whom *he exalted* (Acts ii 33, 26, ver. 31.) *and made to be Lord*. If we do not carry this necessary distinction along with us, we shall often be in a wood and confusion, in perusing the writings of the apostles; more especially their epistles, which are written in a looser and more careless way. They never imagined there could be any ground for caution, or reserve, in the promiscuous application of the same word, *Lord*, already in use, to the supreme Father of all, to Christ, and to other men; as it never entered into their conceptions, that any of their brethren, then, or in after-times, should make a God of, and worship and pray to their honoured Master, Jesus; so lately born, living and dying amongst them; tho' soon raised to life, and to highest honour before God. 'Tis to be hoped, that the time is not far off, when all christians, will open their eyes to see; that there is not the least foundation, in the precepts of Christ, or the practice of his apostles, for the religious worship of him; and when the protestant world especially, will look upon praying to Jesus, in the same light of an unscriptural, unwarrantable will-worship, as the praying to his mother Mary; now practised by the Papists, and once equally practised by themselves.

1 Tim. i. 12.

I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful; putting me into the ministry.

One wonders to see repeated stress laid on such a passage as this, to prove that Christ is the object of religious worship. It was surely most becoming, and natural, for one of so warm a disposition and feelings, as our apostle, sometimes to break forth into such grateful recollection of the Lord Jesus, and expressions of his obligations to him, from whom he had received such extraordinary personal favours; without being supposed thereby to deify him, or to make him the object of worship and prayer; without even supposing him to have any knowledge of what he said and thought.

But the little foundation that there is for such conclusions, will perhaps more easily be seen, by putting a similar case. If, on the *supposition* formerly made concerning Moses; that he was translated, like Enoch, into heaven, without seeing death; his disciple, and successor, Joshua, had said, after the removal of that divine lawgiver into the other world; *I thank Moses, my lord and master, who hath impowered me, for that he counted me faithful, to be the leader and judge of Israel.* Could this have been interpreted as any religious worship of Moses in his servant Joshua, or as authorising it to the Israelites? assuredly it would have been looked on as no more than a mark of

of high regard, and grateful respect for his memory; more especially when there appeared no evidence of any injunctions from Moses, to worship himself; but most express ones, to worship Jehovah alone, and no other. But such language is undoubtedly to be construed in a different manner, when used with respect to God. For then it implies a sense of his awful presence and inspection of the heart, which belongs to him alone; and is a proper act of divine worship.

Those who are so diligent to note these little semblances of prayer to Christ, would do well to observe the very different language used by our apostle, when he speaks of prayer to God. Philip. i. 3. 4. *I thank my God for all your (kind) remembrance of me; always, in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy —* Coloss. i. 3. *We give thanks to God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.* Eph. i. 15, &c. *I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom, &c. iii. 13. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, &c. &c.*

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No language similar, or approaching to this, is ever applied to Christ. But surely, the offering up of prayer to him, if a christian duty, should have been marked out in terms equally pointed and strong; as it was quite a novelty in the world; a thing to which the jews were unused; nay, which they would otherwise look upon as idolatrous: and the heathen converts would stand in need of information concerning it, to guide them in their devotions. I would add, that our fervent and sincere apostle, would not have been wanting to specify it in the plainest terms, without any ambiguity, if he had believed Christ to be the object of prayer: he that in his farewell address to one of his congregations, was bold to say; (Acts xx. 26, 27.) *I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

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THE CONCLUSION.

ST. Luke, in his history of the first planting of the gospel, after the recital of a miraculous cure wrought by Paul and Barnabas, at Lystra, upon a man who had been a cripple from his birth; proceeds thus in his narrative; (Acts xiv. 11, 12, &c.) *And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia: "the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Jupiter, who (i. e. whose temple or statue) was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. Which when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people; crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? (not we also are men of like passions (a) with you: but) we also are men like yourselves; (or, of like mortal nature with*
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(a) The words, *ομοιοπαθεis υμιν*, signify, being possessed of the same frail mortal nature as yourselves; or, liable to the same wants, sickness and death. These idolaters said, that Paul and Barnabas were gods. St. Paul replied; no: we are mortal men like yourselves. In the common meaning of the word *passions*, it would have been very strange, and have ill answered the apostle's purpose, to have said; *we are men of like passions with you*.

The term here used is the same by which Elias is described *ομοιοπαθης*, James v. 17. concerning which I had remark-

yourselves) and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.

From what has been delivered in the preceding pages from the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ, we cannot entertain a doubt, but that if he had been in the same situation with these two apostles, he would have acted the part they did, and with the same fervent zeal, have forbidden the priest and people offering incense to himself; and would have told

remarked in another place, that it ought to have been translated, *Elias was a man of like nature to us*, and not *subject to like passions, as we are*; which, as we commonly understand the word *passions*, was contrary to the apostle's design to have mentioned, contrary to fact, as well as contrary to the true sense of the word. This proposed amendment of our english translation is thus criticised by Mr. Burgh, in his "Inquiry into the belief of the three first centuries, respecting (what he calls) the one Godhead of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," p. 217. "The greek word, in the original (says this gentleman) is *ομοιοπαθης υμιν*. The terms of which this is compounded, I need not set before the greek reader, and the mere english one can receive no benefit from having them stated. Suffice it then to say, that it is impossible to turn this word into literal english, otherwise than our version has done it." But does not Mr. Burgh either knowingly impose on his english readers, or betray great unskillfulness in the greek language, to leave with them his *literal english*, as the true english and meaning of the apostle's words? On numberless occasions, this gentleman shews that *αμετρειν της ανβολης* towards his opponents, right or wrong, which the late Dr. Jortin would have christened, the being *possessed with a cavilling demon*. Several instances of this unfortunate spirit immediately follow that just quoted from him.

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them, that *he was a man like themselves*, who claimed no divine honours from them: but, that there was one living and true God, the creator and author of all things, whom they were to worship alone, and whom he came to make known to them.

It has most strangely fallen out, that the two things, against which this heavenly teacher would seem to have used particular and sufficient precaution to guard his followers, I mean (a) the deifying and worship of himself and his mother Mary; should have been the grand errors and corruptions, which sprung up early, and infected all his followers, except the jewish christians and their descendants; and which have been now for many ages, and still continue to be the characteristic

(a) Whoever attends to the words of Christ, will perceive him continually declaring with great piety, his dependance upon God for every thing; and studious upon all occasions to guard men against undue thoughts of himself; against looking up to him, as having, or being any thing, of himself, but that all he had and was, came from God. Joh. v. 19, 30, twice, in the same breath as it were, he confesses, that he had no powers, that *he could do nothing of himself*. vii. 16. that his doctrine was not his own, but God's, whose messenger he was. vi. 57. that he was the messenger of the living God, and had his being from him, and was supported in life by him. But I must produce at length the first message he sent to his disciples after his resurrection, when he would assuredly use no reserves in telling them who he was, and where with great piety he declares, and in the plainest and strongest terms, that he was a creature of God, and one of the human race.

tic distinction of most of the great and flourishing churches of the christian world.

That such defection from the worship of the one living and true God, when once set on foot and established, should remain for ages, is not at all to be wondered at. For the bulk of mankind have always been prone to embrace a sensible object of worship, especially to worship men like themselves; as it has something familiar in it, requires less attention of mind, and creates less disturbance within, than the idea of an awful invisible

race. Joh. xx. 17. *Jesus saith;—go to MY BROTHERN, and say unto them; I ascend unto MY Father, and YOUR Father, and to MY God, and YOUR God.*

As to his mother *Mary*, she is passed by, one would almost say, with a studied indifference and neglect, in the gospel-history. So that one would hardly think it possible that christians should ever have come to worship and pray to her. But tho' the scriptures give no countenance to it, it was a very natural transition, when men once began to call her son *Jesus*, *God*, and to worship and pray to him; to deify and worship his mother also. The learned know what violent disputes there have formerly been about the propriety of that shocking phrase, *the mother of God*; whether it should be given to *Mary* or not. When once you leave the doctrine of the Divine Unity, laid down in the Scriptures, you know not where you shall stop. The progress of idolatry and profaneness in this respect, cannot be more strongly marked, than in a treatise published in the middle of the last century in France, and dedicated to the Queen-Regent, with the approbation of the Doctors of the Sorbonne, which was translated by that eminent Divine, Dr. Claggett, 1688. The title of the book, "An abridgment of the prerogatives of *St. Ann*, Mother of the Mother of *God*—that is *God's grandmother*, as I find written in my copy of the book.

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being ever present with them. And where the civil power is called in to give its sanction to any religious system whatsoever, and rewards annexed to the professors of it, with fines and discouragements to those who dissent, truth stands but an ill chance to get an hearing, should she be haply on the other side; and what is thus once wrong, is likely so to continue.

But the point of difficulty is, to account for the introduction of the worship of other persons as Gods, into an institution from heaven, purposely given, as here expressed, *to turn men from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.* For some may hence be inclined to think unfavourably of its first founder, and his apostles, as if in their teachings, and the records they left behind them, they had not been sufficiently clear and explicit, upon that which was the primary object of their mission. And it must be owned, that this is a very natural surmise, to any one who surveys the dissensions and disputes of christians, from the days of Athanasius and beyond, to the present hour, about these capital points; viz; whether Jesus was God or man; and whether he was to be prayed to and worshiped, or not: each disputant alleging the words of scripture for himself, and contending that it makes for him.

But it is a satisfaction to find, that there is no just cause or handle given for such disputes,
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in the words of Christ, or the declarations and sentiments of his apostles. There is no diversity, or contradiction there. For Jesus always appears, and declares himself, and was declared by his apostles, and taken by all that conversed with him, to be one of the human race; a devout worshiper of Jehovah, the heavenly Father; and an instructor of others how best to worship him. This idea of Christ presents itself every where. I shall make no apology for producing the apostle Peter's first Sermon; because it is so full to the point, and affords a kind of evidence very decisive, but not commonly attended to.

The occasion was such as would have drawn out our apostle to speak without reserve, if he had had any thing new or important to reveal on these subjects. It was but a few weeks after the death and resurrection of Jesus; at their great festival; at a time, when the sacred historian tells us, (Acts ii. 5.) *there were dwelling at Jerusalem, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*

What does the apostle set himself to teach these men? Has he any different object of worship to propose to them? any other than Jehovah, the God of their fathers?

Does he tell them, that the astonishing miracle, whose influence at the very moment they heard and experienced, in his being able to make himself understood by them who had never learnt their respective languages; that this betokened any thing of the kind concern-

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ing Jesus; that he was to be recognized as the supreme God, or as the first created spirit, and under-creator of all things! What is the real account of their Messiah, Jesus, which Peter would lay before these men, to be carried into their respective countries? for most of them, it may be presumed, had come up to Jerusalem, purely to attend the passover and the present feast of Pentecost.

Learn from his own words.

Ver. 22, 23, 32, 36. *Ye men (a) of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man (a) approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also knew: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.—This Jesus hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses.—Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*

At such a season, speaking to men, whom he might never see again, and who, many of them, probably, might never more be in the way to receive any information concerning

(a) *ἄνθρωπος*—*άνθρωπος*—the same word is used for the Israelites, as for Jesus. If then the Israelites were men; Jesus was a man also. This can no other way be gotten over or set aside; but by the hackneyed unmeaning fiction, and distinction of a human and divine nature in one Person: a distinction which makes the holy scriptures of no use to prove any thing; and by which one might justify all the fables of the heathen Gods.

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his late honoured Master, Jesus, we may be assured, that he would not spare to give them all needful instruction. And what does it amount to? It is this: that Jesus, who had been bred at Nazareth, was a man highly favoured of God; whom their rulers had unjustly put to death: but God had restored him to life, and had given full evidence, that he was their great promised prophet, Messiah, their king.

Our Lord and his apostles are certainly to be cleared of speaking ambiguously or obscurely on this point, in the general tenour of their discourses. Still however the difficulty recurs; whence should have arisen, that wide difference among the followers of Jesus concerning him, which began after the times of the apostles, and has now subsisted for very many ages; that while some, (whose number has much increased of late) look upon him only as a man, such as his apostles generally characterize him: the far greater part reckon him to be the supreme God; or a being next to him, and the creator of all things under him?

I have had no scruple to remark before, what is true in fact, that the deviation from the truth of the gospel, in this and in other points, had its origin from the first heathen converts to the gospel, who grafted their polytheism upon it, which has since long borne so much unhappy fruit. We should all of us however, come much nearer to an agreement in these matters, if we could bring ourselves to take up the scriptures as another book,

without any formed opinion of any thing contained in them; and bend our endeavours to find out what was intended by those who first composed those writings.

I shall mention two unavoidable causes of obscurity in the sacred writings, which require diligent study and application to remove.

1. The first is not peculiar to those writings, but belongs to them in common with all others, composed in former ages, and in a different language. And it arises from peculiar idioms of speech, and allusions to different manners and customs, in different countries; which will always make discourses that are plain and easy at the time to the natives, hard to be understood in remote times and countries.

Thus, the prophet Isaiah, in beautiful imagery borrowed from their ancient history of the first creation of the world, but not intelligible, because not attended to, by ordinary unthinking readers; describes the new establishment of things, and reformation of mankind, by the gospel, as *a new creation*, (Is. lxxv. 17.) *Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*

And St. Paul has been much mistaken by it not being considered, that he adopts the same imagery and allusion, in his lofty description of the power of Christ, or the effects of his
gospel,

gospel in changing the dispositions and manners of mankind: when he says, (Coloss. i. 16.) *By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities and powers: all things were created by him and for him.*

That St. Paul could not intend to treat here of the first creation of all things, besides other (a) reasons that might be given, we had a proof a few pages back, where we found him telling the men of Lycaonia; that it was *the living God*, and not Jesus Christ, *who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.*

But how dark and even contradictory would such passages of scripture as these appear, without a diligent study and comparison of one part of scripture with another?

2. The other source of obscurity is peculiar to Christ and his doctrines: and it arises from the manner in which he taught men their duty and the will of God.

For he did not, like Moses, lay down a settled code of laws, in which each mans duty was marked out with precision and exactness, so as not easily to admit of any mistakes. But this last and best teacher of men, dealt out much of his heavenly instruction, in familiar discourse with those that resorted to him, or fell in his way: which gives greater life and force to his precepts, but at the same

(a) See a Sequel to the Apology, &c. p. 477.

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time demands great attention, that we do not mistake him; as his discourse was always accommodated to the circumstances and character of the person he was conversing with, and adapted to the particular occasion.

Let us take for an example his dialogue with Nicodemus, a man of learning, and of the first rank in his country. He came to Jesus, convinced by his miraculous works, that he was a divine prophet. Joh. iii. 3. *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.* Nevertheless our Saviour's low appearance, and taking upon him no worldly pomp or power, prejudiced the man against believing him to be their great expected prophet, the Messiah; the character which Jesus however assumed, and was from the first universally considered so to do, by the nation.

On these accounts this person resorted privately to Jesus; to avoid being reckoned in the number of his followers: yet full of respect for him, and with great curiosity to know something farther about him and his pretensions.

What now was to be done with such an one, who was well informed, and had good dispositions, but was kept back by secular fears and considerations from embracing the truth? Observe the divine wisdom with which our Saviour replies to him. ver. 3. *Jesus answered and said unto him; verily, verily, I say unto*

unto thee, except a man be born from (a) above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The language is highly figurative; yet easily understood to imply, that his dispositions must be intirely changed; he must become of a *heavenly* temper, renounce all views and expectations of this world its riches and splendour, if he would belong to the Messiah's kingdom.

When the Ruler was posed and confounded with this answer, so contrary to all his former ideas, and thwarting all his favourite hopes; *Jesus said again; ver. 12. if I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you of (b) heavenly things!* i. e. if it be so hard for you to understand such obvious points, as I have now mentioned, concerning the change of temper and inward disposition necessary for becoming my disciple;

(a) Not born again, but, born from above. So the word is translated, a little lower iii. 31. ο ανωθεν ερχομενος, *he that cometh from above.* So also, James iii. 17, η ανωθεν σοφια, *the wisdom from above;* and in other places.

(b) By a way of speaking the jews were accustomed to, things difficult, known only to God, are said *to be in heaven;* and *to go up to heaven,* is to be acquainted with the secret designs of the Almighty. Deut. xxx. 11, 12. *The commandment which I command thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us—* So also *to be in heaven,* *to be in the bosom of the Father,* was easily comprehended by them, to signify the having an extraordinary knowledge of the divine will; and *to come down from heaven,* was to have authority or commission from God, to reveal his will to men; such as John the Baptist, and the ancient prophets had as well as Christ, though inferior to him.

how will you be able to comprehend me when I speak of things still more distant from your thoughts and apprehensions? These things, he goes on afterwards to point out to him; namely, ver. 14, 15, 16. that himself, their Messiah, the favourite of heaven, was to suffer an ignominious death: that his sufferings, by which the truth of his divine mission and doctrine would be evinced, would be the means of bringing all mankind, equally with jews, to be the people of God, and to live with him for ever!

He then subjoins; ver. 13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven; i. e. " altho' I appear a plain ordinary man, I am favoured with the fullest communications from God, above all others."* Or, in still plainer words; " mean as my figure and pretensions are as to this world, I am nevertheless the Messiah." For various well-known reasons, our Saviour seldom in so many words told men directly that he was the Messiah. In the present instance, he seems to have delivered himself in this figurative indirect manner, well understood however by the man he spoke to, that he might not make him hastily declare himself for or against him, but to give him scope and opportunity of seriously considering the matter. And it seems to have had its effect.

That

That the language used by Christ was far from being so abstruse to the Jews, as it appears to us, is shewn in the note, p. 35, and in other places; and they would never conclude, from it, as some of us are apt to do, through ignorance or inattention, that Jesus was in heaven at the time he spoke, or that he had lived and had a being with God before he was born upon earth.

Some may object to all this; why are we not taught religion and our duty in a plain language? To which the answer is You are taught your duty in plain language. Every thing necessary to be known is clearly laid down. This discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus was not intended to teach you *directly* any thing: but is recorded to make you acquainted with his manner of instructing those that came to him: from which much light and benefit may be derived to you, tho' you are not the person for whom it was first intended.

Moreover some degree of obscurity in our Lord's conversation with those that came in his way, is to be expected by us, and by all that live in countries and times at a distance from those transactions. For he must speak in the phrase of the country, to be intelligible to those he conversed with. And his being intelligible to them would cause some obscurity to us, till we become acquainted with the idioms of the language, and the customs of those times.

But

But we should be careful not to build important facts on the peculiar idioms of a language, or figurative expressions only; but on plain declarations, and the whole tenour of a discourse history. I mean such important facts as this; whether Jesus was a man, or the first created spirit, or the supreme God. Those phrases, in the hebrew language, *I came forth from the Father, I am come into the world, I am down from heaven, I had glory with the Father before the world was*, have been shewn to be such as in an inferior degree, might have been used of John the Baptist, or the apostles, as well as by Jesus himself. His countrymen, the jews, and his apostles, that heard our Saviour use this language, did not conclude from it that he was any other than a man. For they afterwards continued to treat him, and to speak of him as such. We should therefore take care to inquire into the real meaning of the scripture-language, in the sense in which it was delivered by Christ, and not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon merely by the sound of words, or misled by our contrary idioms and forms of speech. And it would be well to have the peculiar phraseology of the hebrew and eastern dialect, particularly pointed out and explained, in short notes and references, in our bibles, for the benefit of english readers, that they may thereby become intelligent in the sacred writings, and learn to interpret them for themselves.

But

But vain will be all endeavours to rectify the sentiments and practice of christians, in our own country, with respect to the true character of Jesus Christ, and the sole worship of the one only living and true God, the Father; whilst those spurious passages or wrong translations of scripture, are suffered to remain in our english bibles; which call aloud for amendment, as all the learned are agreed, some few prejudiced persons excepted.

The following passage from Isaiah, in our present translation, contributes greatly, to give wrong impressions concerning God and Christ.

Isaiah ix. 6. *Unto us a child is given—and his name shall be called, wonderful, counsellor, the mighty God, THE EVERLASTING FATHER.* In what manner it is to be rectified and amended, was shewn above, pag. 71.

Acts xx. 28. Instead of — *Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood:* It should be; *Feed the church of the Lord, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Rom. ix. 5. Instead of—*of whom,—Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever—*It should be; *of whom Christ came.* making a full stop there, and then going on—*God, who is over all be blessed for ever.* Or; *of whom Christ came; whose (i. e. the Israelites) is the God over all, who is blessed for ever.*

Philip. ii. 6. Instead of—*who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:* It should be; *who being in the form of*
of

of God, was not eagerly desirous to be like unto God, i. e. to display the divine powers which were given to him.

I Joh. iii. 16. Instead of—*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*: It should be;—*Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us*.

I Joh. v. 7, 8. Instead of—*There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one: and there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*: It should be;—*For there are three that bear record, the spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one*.

Revel. i. 11. Instead of—*saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; and what thou seest, write in a book*: It should be; *saying; what thou seest, write in a book*.

Ordinary English readers should be apprised of these corruptions of the original words of the sacred writers, and wrong translations of them: because otherwise, one single expression of the above kind, will be apt to be decisive with them, and overturn the whole evidence and current of the sacred history to the contrary; which throughout bears testimony, that Jesus was a man and not God.

On account of the various prejudices in which christians are bred up in the present state of things, it will be needful to remind them of some other common misinterpretations of the words of scripture. They

They should be told, that our Saviour's injunction, Matth. xxviii. 19. to make disciples of all nations, *baptising them unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit*, can never with any ground of plausibility be understood to signify, that the Son and holy Spirit are God, as the Father is God: because the writer, St. Matthew, never before, in his history, makes mention of Jesus, but as of a man born, living amongst them, dying, and restored to life; and speaks not of the spirit as being any thing but the power of God; and therefore can never be supposed to mean any thing different in this place, where he mentions them. It is moreover utterly unlikely that he should inculcate such a doctrine, if it were true, barely at the end of his history, and in so cursory a way. And moreover, we find no stress laid on this particular form of baptising. It is not mentioned by the other evangelists. And St. Luke, in the Acts, when he tells of persons being baptised, says, that it was only *in the name of Jesus*.

Christians in these days should also be made acquainted with the powerful arguments which are brought, to persuade and convince, that by the WORD in the beginning of St. John's gospel, is not to be understood, Jesus Christ; but the mighty Word, Power, or Wisdom of God, by which the world was made, and which was afterwards in a high degree communicated to Jesus Christ, and dwelt in him.

Reasons

changed, at all hazards; for that if you make any material alterations, the whole fabric of christianity might be in danger of falling. And therefore they hold it a duty to conform to them, however erroneous; and conclude that the almighty being cannot be displeased with the speculative insincerity of his creatures, when prompted to it by such moives, and for the obtaining of so good an end.

Every one sees where this way of reasoning and acting upon it, leads. It concerns our ancestors for that degree of reformation from the errors of popery, which they obtained 200 years ago; and would have confined us now to the worship of a piece of bread or wafer-cake as the supreme God, at the tinkling of a bell, or with a lighted taper before it, to point out where the Deity was lifted up; or where he was laid reposed, and put up in a box.

Error must thus increase and multiply for ever. For it must always be equally wrong and bad to oppose what is once established. Surely, if things are so, it were better never to disturb ourselves, and inquire at all; but — go to Mecca with the caravan.

Experience however shews, that the upholding of known error, and of irrational doctrines, in the christian church, particularly respecting God and his true worship, is taught by Jesus, operates quite the contrary to what this reason for not removing them supposes. For it contributes to disgust and to turn men intirely from the gospel. This is notoriously
the

the case under the church of Rome, where they go so far as to make it a mortal sin even to doubt of any of their articles of faith. In Italy and France especially, the greater part of professed Catholics as they call themselves, among the upper ranks and the learned, are also professed unbelievers or atheists. This is also known to be a growing evil among ourselves. And will any say, that it is a good state of the christian church, where all outwardly comply with its forms, and profess themselves christians, while few believe one tittle of the truth of the gospel?

Whata learned and worthy confessor, and sufferer for the truth, has very lately advanced, in his letter addressed to Bp. Hurd, (a) deserves the serious notice of all.

If, as he asserts, and produces strong arguments for it not easily set aside; if the whole christian world has been paganized in the point of religious worship, from the fourth century; if, whilst we have been declaiming for two centuries past, against the Romish Church, as the *Man of Sin*, and *Antichrist*, we and all other protestant civil establishments of christianity are found to be *anticristian*; there is assuredly a call for some farther Reformation among us,

(a) A letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry; wherein the importance of the prophecies of the New Testament, and the nature of the grand apostacy predicted in them, are particularly and impartially considered. By Edward Evanson, A. M. London, printed for B. Law, Ave-mary-lane, 1777.

To

To be added to the foregoing work.

Page 29. l. 3. *Insert*——ii. 22. Peter expressly calls Jesus, *a man*, of Nazareth, who had received high extraordinary powers from Almighty God.

A note to p. 31. l. 6. “Quelle profonde sagesse dans ses discours! quelle présence d’esprit, quelle finesse, et quelle justice dans ses réponses!”

Lettre à M. de Beaumont, p. 109.

P. 142. l. 9. from the bottom——

Insert——

Hebrews i. 2. Instead of—*by whom also he made the worlds*——read—*for whom also he made the ages.*—Vide Sequel to the Apology, p. 486. 488. where this is confirmed to be the true sense of the passage.

Some few literal mistakes and lesser omissions the reader is desired to correct with his pen as he goes along.

L

A P O S T-